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A magazine of literature and the arts

Autumn 1984

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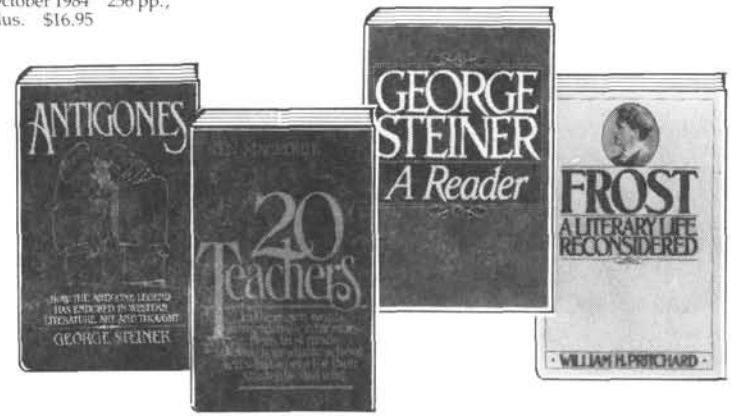

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Report

C. B. COX

The British in India

MANCHESTER, September 1984—A few years ago my wife and I visited India for the first time. At the Oberoi Hotel in Delhi we found ourselves at lunch in the company of a group of Anglo-Indians. Thirty years after India became independent they were revisiting their old homes.

At a table near us sat a typical upper-class English lady in a flowery silk dress and straw hat. When she needed some more butter for her bread she turned towards a middle-aged Indian waiter and in a loud voice shouted 'Boy!'.

My wife and I cringed. It was as if we had walked straight into Forster's *A Passage to India* and were being confronted by Mrs. Turton.

After this incident I was surprised to find how many Indians recall British rule with nostalgia. I've now visited India to teach for the British Council on three occasions, and I've always been treated with great courtesy and generosity. At Simla a couple of years ago an old army sergeant, very polite and proper, stopped me in the street and harangued me for fifteen minutes with his reminiscences. The Indians don't want us back again, of course, and they're proud of their independence, but, now so many years have passed, they recall the virtues of British administration as well as the snobbery and intolerance.

An assistant registrar at my university once worked for the Indian Civil Service. He told me that it was a rule that if he received a gift from an Indian he must in courtesy accept, but within 24 hours he must return a present of similar value. It's this kind of honesty which Indians recall with so much admiration.

The British too are rediscovering and re-assessing their role during the great days of Empire. After the enormous success of Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi,* the film of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* has been drawing large audiences. And then this last winter the whole country has been switching on television to watch Granada TV's brilliant *The Jewel in the Crown,*[1] an adaptation in 14 epi-

[1] *The Jewel in the Crown* will be aired by PBS beginning December 16, 1984 through March 17, 1985. Check local listings for details.

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sodes of Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet.* When this comes to American homes this autumn it is likely to be as successful as *Brideshead Revisited.* At dinner parties in Britain everyone has been discussing the latest episode, and the conversation inevitably involves revaluation of the British Raj. I've heard more talk about India during the last year than in the previous twenty.

In common with many recent English visitors to India, I wasn't happy with Attenborough's presentation of Gandhi. Ben Kingsley's acting, of course, was beyond praise, and the film was wonderfully dramatic, but I felt Gandhi was treated too sympathetically, almost at times with sentimental reverence.

When the film was running in London, Salman Rushdie published in the *Times* a strongly-worded attack. This inevitably provoked a hurt reply from Attenborough and a lively correspondence. Rushdie thought that the film did not do justice to Jinnah, the Muslim leader who became the first governor general of Pakistan, and that Gandhi's policies were in some degree responsible for the deaths of the two million people slain in the riots and massacres after Partition in 1947.

Mrs. Gandhi's recent problems with the Sikhs and the killings of the extremists in the Golden Temple of Amritsar have reminded the world of the fanatical religious conflicts with which the British in their time contended. I've always felt some sympathy for Ronnie Heaslop in *A Passage to India,* who is conscientious and honest in his work as a magistrate. After he's been successful in preventing bloodshed between Mohammedans and Hindus during preparations for a religious procession, his self-satisfaction is mocked. Forster undervalues the Anglo-Indian sense of duty and the integrity of the British administration.

As an outsider I feel I've no right to adjudicate between rights and wrongs when Hindus and Muslims come into conflict. The poverty of India is deeply depressing, and involved with religious practices. As you leave the Grand Hotel in Calcutta, after a sumptuous meal, you are jostled by starving beggars and mothers with emaciated babies in their arms. If you give them a rupee, you're likely to draw a crowd and it may be difficult to escape. You push your way through the outstretched hands and depart in your taxi. If you have a conscience, you can make a donation to Mother Teresa's home for children before you catch your plane back to the West.

In Calcutta's fetid atmosphere it's not easy to believe any political solution to poverty exists. As Forster himself said, things aren't so jolly easy.

It is this sense of complexity which Granada's epic film of *The Jewel in the Crown* captures so brilliantly. Ronald Merrick (played by Tim Pigott-Smith), who tortures Hari Kumar, his Indian rival for the love of Daphne Manners, might have fitted into Forster's *A Passage to India;* and Judy Parfitt as Mildred Layton splendidly portrays

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English arrogance. But the scene is so varied, so rich compared with Forster's limited canvas.

Peggy Ashcroft's acting rivals that of Ben Kingsley. Her portrayal of Barbie Batchelor, the old missionary teacher, is a great triumph. Barbie's old friend, Edwina Crane, hurt during the riots, commits suicide by burning herself to death in her garden shed. My one major criticism of the film is that it returns too often, presumably in search of continuity, to such symbolic scenes. In the novel Miss Crane courageously chooses to teach poor Indian children. On her first visit to a school she is nervous and ashamed of her supposed English superiority. She experiences a sudden moment of insight:

> And it came to Miss Crane then that the only excuse she or anyone of her kind had to be there, alone, sitting on a chair, holding a nosegay, being sung to, the object of awe of uninstructed children, was if they sat there conscious of a duty to promote the cause of human dignity and happiness. And then she was no longer really ashamed of her dress, or deeply afraid of the schoolhouse or the smell of burning cowpats.

Peggy Ashcroft's performance creates many moments that realize Paul Scott's sense of the dignity that resides even in the most ordinary of people.

The novels depend on complicated flashbacks. Sir Denis Forman, Chairman of Granada Television and the enthusiast who set the whole project in motion, decided that television needed a chronological narrative, broken down into sequences each of which would form a one hour episode. A roll of wall paper was chopped into segments about one yard square, pinned around the walls of a room, and then on each was written down the outline of scenes for each episode. After walking some miles around the gallery, shifting pieces and deliberating, he decided it could be done. The result is a magnificent achievement.

A huge problem was that the love story between Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners ends with her death in childbirth after the third episode. How could interest be maintained? The story of Sara Layton takes over, played by Geraldine James who was Mirabehn, daughter of an English admiral and a dedicated follower of the Indian leader in Attenborough's *Gandhi*. Miss James's extraordinarily attractive personality holds together the rest of the sequence.

The photography dwells on Indian landscapes, Simla, Kashmir, Mysore and Udaipur, with delicacy and love. *The Jewel in the Crown* is worth watching for this alone. It's easy to understand why so many Anglo-Indians were charmed for life by these vistas.

At a celebration lunch in Manchester, my wife sat next to Christopher Morahan, the producer. He explained to her that in many scenes the outside locations are in India and the interiors in Grana-

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da's Manchester studios. In the opening sequences the outside of the MacGregor House was filmed in Mysore, but the interior was created in Manchester. When an actor arrived for a party, he stepped out of his car in India and then walked through the front door in Lancashire. A ball bounced by a child in India was caught in England by Charles Dance, playing Sergeant Perron.

I sat next to Sir Denis Forman. As he holds Paul Scott in such high esteem, I didn't like to tell him I think his straightforward narrative sequences a great improvement on the novel.

The film begins with the riots of 1942, and the rape in the Bibighar Gardens, shot in a disused Lancashire quarry. It ends with the massacres of 1947. The last sequence includes the horrific killing of Muslim men, women and children in the carriages of an ambushed train. Morahan decided it would be tactless to stage this butchery in India, where memory of those savage times is still fresh, and so the scene was recreated in a disused station at Quainton in Buckinghamshire.

The film explores the difficult conflict of interests between Hindu and Muslim, British and Indian; but its great distinction is that, as Paul Scott would have wished, it promotes the cause of human dignity and happiness. I shall never forget the acting of Peggy Ashcroft as Barbie, Fabia Drake as Mabel Layton and Susan Wooldridge as Daphne Manners. As soon as Granada arranges a British repeat, I shall watch it all again.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Anthony Powell's Gift

Anthony Powell is about to enter his eightieth year, an occasion for second thoughts about a literary career—and a life generally—that is one of the more heartening ones of this century, as it too moves into latter days. Can it really be more than a half-century since, as a young man in his mid-twenties, Mr. Powell published *Afternoon Men*? This comic tour de force has lost none of its readability nor its power to give a complex kind of literary pleasure. *Afternoon Men* is about a group of young men and women, living in London in the twenties, painting or trying to paint, or to write; working in less than exhilarating occupations; hanging out, without undue enthusiasm, at various little bars or clubs or private parties; conducting love affairs not replete with promise nor certainly with D. H. Lawrentian passion. The milieu resembles that of Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*, transferred from Paris to London; yet, though Powell admired Lewis's early work for its sharp, unsentimental presentation of the physical, of the grotesque, his own style is without a hint of that harsh aggressiveness, the active unpleasantness Pound detected in *Tarr*. Instead, a typical moment in *Afternoon Men* is one like the following, where the mild "hero," Atwater, returns to his flat after an all-night party and, having bid farewell to one Lola, prepares himself for bed:

> Atwater waved. Then he turned towards the house and climbed the stairs again. He put the gin in the cupboard in the sitting-room and went into his bedroom and pulled the curtains. The sun came through the curtains, but not enough to see properly, so he switched on the electric light. He cleaned his teeth. Birds in the garden at the back of the house were singing, which prevented him from going to sleep for some time.

At the risk of being precious, it is that "which" in the final sentence that does the trick by ending the chapter on the

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most inglorious, noncommittal note, just about as significant, as fraught with moral implication, as cleaning one's teeth.

Is this then a book about the emptiness of modern life, the rootlessness of modern man and woman living in a waste land? Not at all; even though, like Eliot in *The Waste Land*, Powell avoided speaking from the inside—from the "souls" of his characters—the better to observe them externally, detachedly. If this is "satire" (and Powell suggests in his memoirs that it is closer to comedy), it is a satire without moral bite. We are not to look down on Atwater from a superior position, but rather to observe him there, cleaning his teeth, being prevented from going to sleep by those birds in the back garden. There is, as I have said, a real satisfaction in this writing, and one that the English novel, with its tradition of vigorous commentary and its moralistic bent, had seldom attempted to generate.

Close on the heels of *Afternoon Men* came two further novels, *Venusberg* and *From a View to a Death*. In his memoirs Powell quotes Nietzsche to the effect that the individual when examined is always comic, and he continued his examination, refining it in the latter novel into his most subtle, indeed beautiful creation. When compared to his contemporary and friend Evelyn Waugh's first two novels (*Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*), notable for their hilarious slapstick effects (in the former a drunken public schoolmaster, acting as starter in a boys footrace, shoots off the gun and fatally wounds little Lord Tangent in the heel), Powell's comedy is a model of understated effects, with jokes so quiet as to allow the unwary reader to miss them entirely. Humor this dry hardly looks like humor, which is the artistic point. When the hero in *From a View to a Death*, the splendidly named Zouch, departs the room of his fiancée's sister whom he has just seduced, we get the following:

> The curtain had been drawn only half across the window and now it was light outside. Zouch had slept badly. He had cramp in one of his legs and, as he moved to stretch it out, he felt Joanna's arm resting on his shoulder. . . . He disengaged himself from her and, getting out of bed softly, he went across the room to the open window. He looked out of it towards the fields, at this hour unnaturally close up to the house. The morning light brought

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> them just up beyond the lawn. The grey, mysterious English fields. Small pockets of mist hung a short way above the ground and round the roots of the oaks in the park. Farther away the steamy mist grew thicker so that it filled the gap between the trees and hid the artificial water. But beyond, the atmosphere became clear again and the land rolled away upwards to the woods and cardboard hills. A sudden breath of cold air, intoxicatingly fresh, came into the room and he shivered and began to button up his pyjama coat which was open and which flapped around him. He looked at the time by Joanna's watch beside the bed and he knew that he must be getting back into his own room. His dressing-gown was on the floor. He picked it up and put it on, at the same time slipping his feet into his bedroom slippers. Then he leaned over and kissed Joanna lightly upon the forehead. She stirred but did not wake. Zouch opened the door, trying to make as little noise as possible, but the hinge creaked menacingly. He set off along the passage in the direction of his own room. He was not feeling at all well.

Zouch is a bounder, no doubt about it, but the writing moves him into a different realm of feeling and perception. In the open, improvisatory freedom of Powell's style, even in his early, carefully wound-up entertainments, one senses *A Dance to the Music of Time* on the horizon.

Two further novels (*Agents and Patients*, *What's Become of Waring*) are amusing enough but show no development from the earlier ones. On the non-fictional front, Powell does a stint in Hollywood as a scriptwriter; serves in World War II; writes a biography of the seventeenth-century biographer, John Aubrey; settles into a country house in Somerset and takes on the literary editorship of *Punch*. At the end of the 1940s, he begins the great undertaking which will occupy him for a quarter-century.

In *Faces in My Time*, volume three of his memoirs, he makes a lovely statement about marriage which deserves to be saluted as a comfort-bringer for all those married only once:

> Even in marriage at least twenty or thirty years are required to test the implications of a given partner; both parties, in the nature of human beings, changing in the Hegelian manner all the time. On this delicate question it might be added that, by the age of close on twenty-nine, I had never asked another woman to marry me—and, after nearer fifty than forty years, to speak unequivocally, have never wished to be married to another woman.

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> In consequence, taking a risk in the matter seems something not always to be condemned.

I don't know what "the Hegelian manner" is exactly, but otherwise the writing is classic Powell: in the use of "implications" as what the "given partner" will have; or in the insistence that he speaks unequivocally about never wishing to be married to another woman, then following immediately with the sly equivocation of "taking a risk in the matter seems something not always to be condemned." It is the minimal way of making the maximal case, and it bears relation to the grand narrative strategy of *The Music of Time*.

Powell has written engagingly about the advantages he imagined would be attendant upon undertaking a many-volumed novel. Such an undertaking would offer

> release from the re-engagement every year or so of the same actors and extras hanging about for employment at the stage door of one's creative fantasy. Instead of sacking the lot at the end of a brief run—with the moral certainty that at least one or two of the more tenacious will be back again seeking a job . . . the production itself might be extended, the actors made to work longer and harder for much the same creative remuneration spread over an extended period: instead of being butchered at regular intervals to make a publisher's holiday.

As with the marriage—which had to last a long time before its implications could be fully tested—the "taking a risk" in embarking on an extended novel, a "production" of some twenty-five years, seemed "something not always to be condemned."

It has occurred to me that my love for *The Music of Time* is not unrelated to my seven-year devotion to a particular TV soap opera, *Search for Tomorrow*. There too, though at a level of language and simplicity of motive which recalls anything *but* the style of Anthony Powell, the actors are made to work longer and harder over an extended period, do not—unless they prove quickly incompetent or decidedly unpopular with the viewers—get sacked at the end of a brief run. So the mere fact that Jo or Stephanie or Stu (to name some heroes from *Search*) have persisted in the face of sensational adversities for seven years (Jo has persisted for thirty-three years,

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since 1951 when *Search* made its debut and the first volume of Powell's saga appeared) is enough to endear them to one. As it is with Dicky Umfraville or J. G. Quiggin or, most assuredly, Kenneth Widmerpool.

These and the other individuals who populate the long novel are abstracted and raised to elegiac dignity and sadness by the introductory frame of the whole sequence. The narrator has come across some workmen gathered around a bucket of coke burning in front of their shelter. Snow is falling, and as the flames hiss up ("the remains of two kippers, loosely wrapped in newspapers" have been tossed on the coals) and day draws in, the narrator thinks of the ancient world, of legionaries warming themselves at a brazier, and of other fabulous shapes "infinitely removed from life, and yet bringing with them memories of things real and imagined." He then thinks of Poussin's painting

> in which the Seasons, hand in hand and facing outward, tread in rhythm to the notes of the lyre that the winged and naked greybeard plays. The image of Time brought thoughts of mortality: of human beings, facing outward like the Seasons, moving hand in hand in intricate measure: stepping slowly, methodically, sometimes a trifle awkwardly, in evolutions that take recognisable shape: or breaking into seemingly meaningless gyrations, while partners disappear only to reappear again, once more giving pattern to the spectacle: unable to control the melody, unable, perhaps, to control the steps of the dance.

With this pitch of eloquence, the stakes of the long novel are put high indeed; yet the next sentence notes that "Classical associations made me think, too, of days at school," and we move almost at once to the figure of Widmerpool, running, "in a sweater once white and cap at least a size too small, hobbling unevenly, though with determination, on the flat heels of spiked running-shoes." This figure is presented with the mixture of satire and admiration (or wonderment, rather) that will characterize Powell's treatment of things and people throughout the novel, but never more distinctly than in this opening portrait:

> . . . As the damp, insistent cold struck up from the road, two thin jets of steam drifted out of his nostrils, by nature much distend-

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> ed, and all at once he seemed to possess a painful solidarity that talk about him had never conveyed. Something comfortless and inelegant in his appearance suddenly impressed itself on the observer, as stiffly, almost majestically, Widmerpool moved on his heels out of the mist.

The rather stiff majesty of this writing is of course—unlike Widmerpool's sense of himself—well-seasoned with satiric creation (Widmerpool is one of Wyndham Lewis's "wild bodies"), and the elements blend together in the phrase modifying those nostrils: "by nature much distended."

On the basis of such writing, the rule rather than the exception throughout *The Music of Time*, I have trouble understanding how any reader can manage to resist for long a world of such vividly realized gestures and manners and voices. Yet if you are the sort who reads predominantly for "content," thinking of the style as an added layer of flavoring, then as in the case with other comic writers, you may judge that Powell's characters are too unimportant and limited to bother about. But no one makes that complaint about Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*, a book close to Powell's heart, and one in which the characters are at least as outrageous or deluded or just plain silly as anybody in *The Music of Time*. In fact, the content of Powell's work is rich the way any fully imagined world is rich, no matter how much permeated by what we have learned to refer to, disapprovingly, as the "old-boy network." The point is that these old boys, and girls, are a good deal more amusing and imaginable—because they have been written about so fully and particularly—than the ones we went to school with who, for all their liveliness, existed without benefit of Anthony Powell.

It is the author—or rather the authorial voice—that at the beginning and the end makes all the difference. In his essay about Scott Fitzgerald, Lionel Trilling wrote, wisely, that:

> What underlies all success in poetry, what is even more important than the shape of the poem or the wit of metaphor is the poet's voice. It either gives us confidence in what is being said or it tells us that we do not need to listen; and it carries both the modulation and the living form of what is being said. In the novel no less than in the poem, the voice of the author is the decisive factor . . .

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"The modulation and the living form of what is being said" is indeed what Powell's voice carries in *The Music of Time*, and the form as I hear it is that of powerful intimacy, like nothing I experience in other contemporary literature. Knowing that such a quality can't be illustrated by a passage, and also knowing that probably only those who have already felt it in reading Powell's narrative will be convinced, I still offer an instance of it from *The Acceptance World* (volume 3 in the sequence) in which Nick Jenkins (the narrator) and Jean Templar first act upon their desire for one another. They are in the back seat of Peter Templar's (Jean's brother's) car, being driven to his house somewhere in the west of London. The passage is evidence that, in Powell's terms, "the process of love is rarely unilateral," and the proof occurs after Hammersmith and Chiswick have been traversed and the Great West Road attained:

> The exact spot must have been a few hundred yards beyond the point where the electrically illuminated young lady in a bathing dress dives eternally through the petrol-tainted air; night and day, winter and summer, never reaching the water of the pool to which she endlessly glides. Like some image of arrested development, she returns for ever, voluntarily, to the springboard from which she started her leap. A few seconds after I had seen this bathing belle journeying, as usual, imperturbably through the frozen air, I took Jean in my arms.
>
> Her response, so sudden and passionate, seemed surprising only a minute or two later. All at once everything was changed. Her body felt at the same time hard and yielding, giving a kind of glow as if live current issued from it. I used to wonder afterwards whether, in the last resort, of all the time we spent together, however ecstatic, those first moments on the Great West Road were not the best.

Perhaps this needs no comment, other than to remark that (with Trilling's essay still in mind) the voice here bears resemblances to Nick Carraway-Fitzgerald's in *Gatsby*. But it is only one of Anthony Powell's voices of powerful intimacy.

Most recently he has published his first novel since concluding the long one. *O, How the Wheel Becomes It!* is a deft and easeful doing of a crucial incident in the life of a literary hack named G.F.H. Shadbold, and it is filled with delightful

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pettinesses, small vanities and embarrassments, plus a number of literary jokes (the English being masters of these). Its manner is a fusion of the earlier novels' size and usually third person narrative, with the elaboration of sentence found so frequently in the later ones. When a recent interviewer made the mistake of asking the author what was the *purpose* of this most recent novel—what was he trying to *say*—his answer was that really one didn't know what to do with one's mornings; one couldn't just keep hanging about downstairs, now could one? It is an answer in tune with the generously giving yet withholding spirit of Anthony Powell, who for fifty-five years has given us so much we want to keep.

Coming in the Winter 1984–85 issue of
The Hudson Review:

**New York Intellectuals in the '40s:
Letters by Weldon Kees**

The poet and fiction writer, Weldon Kees, was at the center of the New York literary world in the 1940s. His never-before-published and witty letters describe Edmund Wilson and Mary McCarthy at home . . . a visit with Elizabeth Bishop to see Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth's Hospital . . . candid glimpses of W. H. Auden, Marianne Moore, Truman Capote, Conrad Aiken and James Agee . . . a visit to the home of William Carlos Williams . . . the doings inside TIME magazine . . . the split-second make up of wartime newsreels.

Also in this issue: "Time in the Valley," by Ursula K. LeGuin, and Louis Simpson on V. S. Naipaul.

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ROBERT SCHULTZ

When the Magnitude of the Possible Dawned

1

Last night we were lost. This morning
The back yard argues, as ever,
All pain is minor and passing.
Solid light, in its blocks and slabs,
Displaces vague fears, the night
Benign, domestic beneath trimmed shrubs.
By this light I'm stripping wild vines
From the plum, while its blossoms
Snow and the vines haul back, perverse
And muscular, tearing at last.
The grass throbs brighter the deeper
I breathe, and the season burns.
How surely the year finds its way
Toward spring, where Sally kneels
In the lettuce rows, a streak of clay
Like rouge on one cheek. Beside her
Schuyler careens and falls, inspects
A red clod, and rises again, his face
Aglow from within. So the day
Wheels by. And I am the watchful
Husbandman at evening here on a spinning
Ball when the green lawns tilt and night
Spills out from hedges and trees.

2

In dissolving night, when all is possible,
Sky a caldron of stars distending
To spew the planets or melt them down,
The lights of creation and decreation

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Sparkle inseparably. Here by my son,
While rapid creepers retake the plum
And Sally pitches in troubled sleep,
I keep my watch

Through dangerous hours
When the night-light's glow
Throws a nimbus about
My viral, incendiary boy.

His hot skin burns me.
Asleep, he leans in a sprinter's pose
While I kneel on the floor,
Sponging him down from 104.

This bomb is smart,
Homing its fire to the heart.

Bare on the Earth in this little room
Where the moment crests and I waken
Anew, again and again,
What may not happen?

Pray without ceasing.

*

Bless Aaron Bobb,
Who, my son's age,
Has died of a cancer
Strangling his heart.

Relieve his parents
Of their wildest rage
Which seeks an answer
Beyond all art.

3

When the magnitude of the possible
Dawned—a morning doubly brilliant—

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Many were so near they vanished instantly.
Others ran to the city's rivers, naked
But indistinguishable, woman from man.
As a black rain fell on the fires, the wounded
Dug for the buried wounded.

"Although we were lying side by side on the stairs,
We did not recognize each other.
He seemed unable to open his eyes or mouth
For the swelling of his burns, but he said somehow:
'Are you Mr. Matsumuro?' It was Yoshimoto,
And he knew me, too, when I spoke."

After the sickness and mourning, the spiking
Temperatures, bodily ruin unspeakable,
Grief and listlessness cupping the loss,
Survivors slipped out of gloves
Of themselves, sloughed off old surfaces,
Suffered grafts and reconstructions, and lived
With explosives buried inside.

4

Especially after the acreage fires
The burr-oak thrives, its jack-box

Seeds tripped loose by the heat.
We tell ourselves such facts

As we can, to redeem charred waste,
And we note tough weeds scrabbling

Quick on a bank dozed clear.
The first mean vines knit up

A deep gouge, making soil for the next
Growth in line. New seeds more delicate

Follow, succession leading through pines
To beech, to this hardwood stand where

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The shady floor is a powder of leaves,
Inviting and cool.

How spacious the bottomless
Sky appears from where I lie

In leafmeal and spines.
Trunks aim high toward the vanishing

Point where a star will appear
And tug all night on the buried dead.

By morning fingers, slender
And white, will have broken the loam.

Runners will leaf and at bushes
Or windfalls their tendrils loop

To entangle and climb,
To consume with a fire of their own.

Though soil is ash, and I
Stretch myself over strata of bones,

Does the pea-vine climb less securely up?
Is the honeysuckle annulled?

I will rest myself in this undergrowth,
Serene as the ferns, the columbine, moss,

Clematis, and grass—as the whole
Unconscious world in which

The moment is full
And unhistorical.

5

Out from this chapel, its green
Enfolding sacristy quieting
All it surrounds—the weavings

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Of grass, composures of weeds,
The scent of mint from certain
Crushed leaves, above it all
Hypnotic wavings of trees acircle—
Out from this chapel yet something
Reaches from me toward my life
In the intricate flames of destruction
And love.

6

Out from the oak in the fireplace grate
Heat and light uncoil in tongues,
Hissing their song of the Fortunate Man
Who rests by wife and child at home
While November gusts. Needles, leaves,
And bits of trash, finding their motion
In sudden whirlwinds, wander the streets.
The plum and its vine, now stripped and wiry,
Huddle their warmth in the naked yard.
I gaze out the window as night comes on;
Sally reads; Schuyler asks to poke the fire.
Sparks like souls ascend the dark shaft.

Beyond our most immediate air,
Behind the ridge at evening's edge, the sun
Ignites the sky at its hem, and the sheerest
Garment we know goes up. Sleeves of flame
Extend toward the zenith; clouds like ingots
Heat and glow. Even the icy cirrus burn,
Fanned into coals, irradiating the upper air
As our windows flare and the whole sky twists.

To live within this involving flame,
We must be fire. Sally, we live by burning
Slowly, and know ourselves best
When we recognize the banked up fires
In each other's eyes. I think of them
When the evening reddens, the sky folding up
Like Earth's last day. It gathers me
And lets me go, a nightly *memento.*

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Public Servant

In his diary entry dated September 18, 1705, a month before his eighty-fifth birthday, John Evelyn set down with special gratification the latest facts of his life and times:

> my Gr: Son was Married by the Arch-Bishop of Cant: in Lambeth Chapell: to Ann, Daughter to Mrs. Boscawen, sister to the L. Godolphin, L. High Treasurer:—And, with aboundance of Relations on both sides, most magnificently Entertained with supper that night, by her Mother:
>
> Most of the rest of this Weeke spent in receiving Visites of greate persons.[1]

Toward this event he had devoted years of undauntable effort—approaches and persuasions, repetitions and reminders, wearying ceremonious persistence, patience, patience, patience, bargainings, testamentary tidyings and rearrangements, the ballet of vicarious upward-mobility courtship—and five months later he died, having fulfilled his ultimate family obligation of gaining for his grandson and heir a splendid marriage (as well as, to help maintain it, a lucrative and high-sounding government sinecure for the bridegroom from the bride's uncle, the Lord High Treasurer).

The entry is typical in tone and substance: the calm, circumstantial recitation of the facts; the names of "great persons"—imagine in those days a marriage of commoners by the Archbishop of Canterbury! but out of context of the whole life and diary it might suggest a social climber, a name-dropper, a hanger-on; and never could anybody who lived in daily and familiar association with the great be less correctly described by such terms. For instance, the Archbishop was a personal friend of Evelyn's and took counsel with him on

[1] THE DIARY OF JOHN EVELYN, selected and edited by *John Bowle*. Oxford University Press. $27.50.

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church matters; the Lord High Treasurer—chief government minister to Queen Anne—was another friend, once married to yet another dear friend of Evelyn's who years earlier had died in childbirth; and the great persons paying their respects whom Evelyn doesn't pause to name would have been numerous, representing an extensive range of interests, and all of them affectionately friendly with this useful, conscientious, and versatile man full of years and virtues.

Evelyn was an orderly man, a faithful and lifelong believer in royalist legitimacy who lived through the wildest and most tragic period for English kings and English politics. He was born during the reign of James I; serving Charles I, "went to Hampton Court [on October 10, 1647], wher I had the honour to kisse his Majesties Hand, and give him an Account of severall things I had in charge, he being now in the power of those execrable Villains who not long after Mu[r]dered him," but he didn't witness the execution of "the martyr-king" because he couldn't bear to attend (nor did he witness the execution of the regicides after the Restoration; he wasn't a vengeful or bloodthirsty man); came to be acquainted with Charles II in exile and did him some *sub rosa* service during the Commonwealth; with exceptional and appropriate fervor celebrated the Restoration in the streets of London—

> [May] 29[, 1660] This day came in his Majestie Charles the 2d to London after a sad, and long Exile, and Calamitous Suffering both of the King and Church: being 17 yeares: This was also his Birthday, and with a Triumph of above 20000 horse and foote, brandishing their swords and shouting with unexpressable joy: The wayes straw'd with flowers, the bells ringing, the streetes hung with Tapissry, fountaines running with wine: The Major, Aldermen, all the Companies in their liver[ie]s, Chaines of Gold, banners; Lords and nobles, Cloth of Silver, gold and vellvet every body clad in, the windos and balconies all set with Ladys, Trumpets, Musick, and myriads of people flocking the streetes and was as far as Rochester, so as they were 7 houres in passing the Citty, even from 2 in the afternoone 'til nine at night: I stood in the strand, and beheld it, and blessed God: And all this without one drop of bloud, and by that very army, which rebell'd against him: but it was the Lords doing, *et mirabile in oculis nostris*: for such a Restauration was never seene in the mention of any history, antient or modern, since the returne of the Babylonian Captivity, nor so joyfull a day, and so bright, ever seene in this nation: this hapning when to expect or effect it, was past all humane policy.

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—and Evelyn at once became and throughout Charles's reign remained one of the King's most trusted and most frequently called-upon counselors and functionaries; knew and served the Duke of York who succeeded as James II, regretting mainly his rigid and missionary Roman Catholicism which threatened "the national religion" and therefore public order till he was deposed by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, itself an event less than glorious for Evelyn because it muddied the springs of legitimacy, though as late as April 3, 1700, in his eightieth year, he "went, with Sir Chr: Wren, Surveyor of his Majesties Workes and Buildings, to Kensington, to present the King [William] with the Model and several drafts ingraved, of the Hospital now erecting at Greenewich for Sea-Men, The A: Bish: of Cant: introducing us; His Majestie receiving us with greate satisfaction, and incouraging the prosecution of the Work."

Wren had been a friend since at Oxford a half-century earlier Evelyn had sought out "that miracle of a Youth, Mr. Christopher Wren." Adviser to Charles II on civic improvements and public buildings, Evelyn conferred with the great architect on such projects as the rehabilitation of Old St. Paul's and, after it had burned to the ground in the Great Fire of 1666, the plans for the new St. Paul's; also, the Chelsea "Royal Hospital for Emerited Souldiers" and the first public library in London. Wren's name pops up in quite another matter too. When in 1698 young Tsar Peter—known to history as the Great—of Russia visited England to study shipbuilding, King William rented for him and his entourage Evelyn's estate, Sayes Court: "they ruined Mary Evelyn's best sheets; they smashed window panes, broke the furniture and damaged the pictures; Evelyn's precious garden was 'damnified,' fruit trees broken, potholes made in the gravel, holly bushes broken. The Tsar and his merry men even smashed wheelbarrows, so that, following Evelyn's later reference to 'hedge breakers' in his 'now ruined garden,' a muddled legend grew up . . . that the Tsar, trundled in a wheelbarrow, had crashed the nine-foot-high holly hedge himself."[2] Evelyn

[2] John Bowle, *John Evelyn and His World* (London, 1981), p. 220.

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notes that he "went to Deptford to view how miserably the Tzar of Moscovy had left my house after 3 moneths making it his Court, having gotten Sir Cr: Wren his Majesties Surveyor and Mr. London his Gardener to go down and make an estimate of the repairs, for which they allowed 150 pounds in their report to the L. of the Treasury." Fair is fair. A public servant isn't just a patsy for guests of the state.

Evelyn is the very pattern of the public servant, no courtier or bureaucrat but an active citizen. In his public life he has no purpose but to serve King and country (many times he refused honors, including knighthood), and his purpose is so plain that it brings out the best in those he serves, as for example his long, close, and rather endearing connection with Charles II attests: Evelyn is the only well-placed and honest recorder of Charles's behavior who makes him seem often, of all things, *likable*. The Great Plague of 1665, occurring during the Second Dutch War, found Evelyn on admiralty business in and near London, among other duties supervising the care of prisoners of war and wounded; and by his own choice he stayed on to perform his duties while the Court and everybody else who could manage took refuge as far from the city as possible. When the Plague had abated, Evelyn "went to waite on his Majestie" at Hampton Court, where the King

> ran towards me, and in most gracious manner gave me his hand to kisse, with many thanks for my Care, and faithfullnesse in his service, in a time of that greate danger, when every body fled their Employments; he told me he was much oblig'd to me, and said he was severall times concern'd for me, and the peril I under-went, and did receive my service most acceptably. . . . After this his Majestie was pleas'd to talke with me alone neere an houre, of severall particulars of my Employment, and ordred me to attend him againe the thursday following at White-hall: Then the Duke [of York] came towards me and embrac'd me with much kindnesse, and told me, if he had but thought my danger would have ben so greate, he would not have sufferd his Majestie to employ me in that Station. . . ."

Charles, a lazy, cynical, and profligate man but no fool, saw Evelyn as one of the few people available to him who could be counted on to do what ought to be done and do it without fuss or a rakeoff. He appointed him in peace or war to every sort of permanent and *ad hoc* royal commission (e.g. on the

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colonies: Puritan New England—less enthralled than Evelyn by the Restoration—was, already in 1671! "al most upon the very brink of renouncing any dependance of the Crowne"); despatched him on many confidential embassies, if necessary on the spur of the moment and without a moment's hesitation. Not only did he trust this decent man but he seems to have had a personal fondness for him—the appeal of white to tattletale gray—which he went out of his way to show evidence of: "[April] 30[, 1663] Came his Majestie to honor my poore Villa with his presence, viewing the Gardens and even every roome of the house; and was then pleased to take a small refreshment"; "[October 28, 1664] . . . his Majestie gave me thanks (before divers Lords and noble men) for my Book of *Architecture* and *Sylva* againe . . . then caused me to follow him alone to one of the Windows, he asked me if I had any paper about me un-written, and a Crayon; I presented him with both, and then laying it on the Window stoole, he with his owne hands, designed to me the plot for the future building of White-hall . . . which royal draft, though not so accurately don, I reserve as a rarity by me: After this he talked with me of severall matters, and asking my advice, of many particulars . . ."; "[January] 10[, 1662] Being call'd into his Majesties Closet, when Mr. Cooper (the rare limmer) was crayoning of his face and head, to make the stamps by, for the new mill'd mony, now contriving, I had the honour to hold the Candle whilst it was doing; choosing to do this at night and by candle light, for the better finding out the shadows; during which his Majestie was pleasd to discourse with me about severall things relating to Painting and Graving. . . ." (But too much royal attention gave him a touch of cabin fever, "and [I] slip'd home, being my selfe much indisposs'd and harrass'd, with going about, and sitting up to write, etc." He had nothing of the courtier in him.)

Evelyn might also accompany the King on a stroll in the palace gardens for a visit with Nell Gwyn, "Mrs. Nellie as they cal'd an impudent Comedian, she looking out of her Garden on a Tarrace at the top of the Wall, and [the King] standing on the greene Walke under it. . . . Thence the King walked to the Dutches of Cleavelands, another Lady of Pleasure and curse of our nation." Or on a visit to the Duchess of Ports-

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mouth's apartment in Whitehall just redone for the third time and as usual at enormous expense, "with ten times the richnesse and glory beyond the Queenes"; or at a state dinner for foreign dignitaries, who are seated at the table alternately with Charles's mistresses and natural children. Charles died the morning of February 6, 1685, and that evening Evelyn recollects a scene in the palace on the Sunday before: "luxury, and prophanesse, gaming, and all dissolution, and as it were total forgetfullnesse of God (it being Sunday Evening) . . . the King, sitting and toying with his Concubines Portsmouth, Cleaveland, and Mazarine: etc: A french boy singing love songs, in that glorious Gallery, whilst about 20 of the Greate Courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2000 in Gold before them, upon which two Gent: that were with me made reflexions with astonishment, it being a sceane of utmost vanity; and surely as they thought would never have an End: six days after was all in the dust."

But once again fair is fair, and Evelyn is much too alert an observer to diminish anybody to a single quality. Whenever he records a death, he subjoins a brief, shrewd, inclusive character of the deceased; and here is Charles II's:

> A prince of many Virtues, and many greate Imperfections, Debonaire, Easy of accesse, not bloudy or Cruel: his Countenance fierce, his voice greate, proper of person, every motion became him, a lover of the sea, and skillful in shipping, not affecting other studys, yet he had a laboratory and knew of many Empyrical Medicines, and the easier Mechanical Mathematics: Loved Planting, building, and brought in a politer way of living, which passed to Luxurie and intollerable expense: He had a particular Talent in telling stories and facetious passages of which he had innumerable, which made some bouffoones and vitious wretches too presumptuous. . . . He tooke delight to have a number of little spaniels follow him, and lie in his bed-Chamber, where often times he suffered the bitches to puppy and give suck, which rendred it very offensive, and indeede made the whole Court nasty and stinking: An excellent prince doubtlesse had he ben lesse addicted to Women, which made him uneasy and allways in Want to supply their unmeasurable profusion. . . . Certainely never had King more glorious opportunities to have made himselfe, his people and all Europ happy, and prevented innumerable mischiefs, had not his too Easy nature resign'd him to be menag'd by crafty

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> men, and some abandoned and prophane wretches, who corrupted his otherwise sufficient parts, disciplin'd as he had ben by many afflictions, during his banishment. . . . He was ever kind to me and very gracious upon all occasions, and therefore I cannot without ingratitude but deplore his losse, which for many respects (as well as duty) I do with all my soule.

Most of Evelyn's "diary" was written up years later from notes he had made at the time, which occasionally he enriched with later information and commentary. From 1684 onward, however, it's an unrevised contemporary diary. So here in 1685 he is writing within hours of Charles's death: he's morally bound to express his still fresh personal gratitude; he doesn't know of the secret subsidies from the French king, or of Charles's secret deathbed acceptance of Roman Catholicism (and doubts it when told of it later by his friend Samuel Pepys, who asked King James pointblank and was shown papers written by Charles ostensibly confirming it); he didn't have decades to brood over Charles's shortcomings as Bishop Burnet did before producing in *History of My Own Times* a character etched in acid (the best Burnet can find to say about Charles is that "he had in him some vices that were less hurtful, which corrected his more hurtful ones"). Notwithstanding, it's about as true-to-life as a *nil nisi bonum* character of Charles could hope to be.

Nor does Evelyn in his diary ignore the terrible injustices of arbitrary power as practiced by a self-serving King who wittily remarked that he had no intention of setting out on his travels again (having had all the exile he could stomach). Charles was ready to sacrifice forthwith any officer or minister at all whenever his own safety, or even his convenience, demanded it. The Earl of Clarendon, "the faithful servant of the royal family in its long exile" (Trevelyan, *History of England*), was Charles's diligent, firm, even-handed chief minister for the crucial first years after the Restoration; but when the Court Cabal ("especially," according to Evelyn, "the boufoones and Ladys of Pleasure") and such acts of God as the Fire and the Plague called for a scapegoat, Charles dismissed him without a qualm, graciously allowing him to flee to France ahead of arrest and confinement (of course he was Evelyn's friend: "he looked and spake very disconsolately, af-

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ter some while deploring his condition to me, I tooke my leave, and the next morning heard he was gon"). Or Evelyn's "most noble and illustrious friend, the Earl of Ossorie" pours out to Evelyn his grievance against the King and Lord Sunderland, the secretary of state, who has just told the King "before my L: Ossories face, That Tangier was not to be kept, but would certainly be lost; and yet added, that twas fit, my L: Ossorie should be sent, that they might give some account of it to the world, meaning (as supposed,) the next Parliament, when all such miscarriages would probably be examin'd, This my L: O: tooke very ill of my L: S. and not kindly of his Majestie, who resolving to send him with an incompetent force, seem'd (as his Lordship tooke it) to be willing to cast him away upon not onely an hazardous Adventure, but in most mens opinions Impossible" (but the Earl was lucky, taking ill of a "Malignant feavor" that same evening and dying four days after he had complained to Evelyn). Or, during the Third Dutch War, the *de facto* judicial murder of the Earl of Sandwich, "that incomparable person, and my particular friend," who because of his skill and modesty as a naval commander had been accused of cowardice by less trustworthy and more reckless commanders and now had to prove himself to King and country by dying in battle:

> [I] take my leave of his Lordship . . . shaking me by the hand bid me god buy, he should he thought see me no more, and I saw to my thinking something boading in his Countenance; no says he, they will not have me live: Had I lost a Fleete (meaning on his return from Bergen, when he tooke the E. India prise) I should have fared better; but be it as please God; I must do I know not what, to save my reputation; something to this effect, he had hinted to me; but thus I tooke my leave: and well I remember, that the Duke of Albemarle, and my now Lord Clifford, had I know not why, no greate opinion of his Courage, because in former Conflicts, being an able and experienc'd sea-man (which neither of them were) he allwayes brought of his Majesties ships, without losse, though not without as many markes of true Courage as the stoutest of them; and I am witnesse, that in the late War, his owne ship was pierced like a Culender: But the buisinesse was, he was utterly against the War from the beginning, and abhor'd the attacquing of the Smyrna fleete; He did not favour the brutish and heady expedition of Clifford at Bergin; nor was he so stupidly furious, and confident as was the D: of Albemarle, who be-

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> lieved he could vanquish the Hollander with one Squadron: My L: Sandwich was prudent as well as Valiant, and allways govern'd his afairs with successe, and little losse, he was for deliberation, and reason, they for action and slaughter without either; and for this, whispered it, as if my L: of Sandwich were not so Gallant, because he was not rash, and knew how fatal it were to loose a Fleete, such as was that under his Conduct, and for which these very persons would have censurd him on the other side: This it was which I am confident griev'd him, and made him enter like a Lion, and fight like one too, in the middst of the hottest service, where the stoutest of the rest, seing him ingagd, and so many ships upon him, durst not, or would not, come into his succour, as some of them, whom I know, might have don. Thus this gallant Person perished. . . . He was learned in the Mathematics, in Musique, in Sea affaires, in Political: Had ben divers Embassies, was of a sweete obliging temper; Sober, Chast, infinitly ingenious, and a true noble man, an ornament to the Court, and his Prince, nor has he left any that approch his many Virtues behind him.

Being the best and longest-surviving public servant of his time didn't prevent Evelyn from having decisive, downright, unconventional opinions about public men and public events. Like his friend the Earl of Sandwich he served the King faithfully during the Dutch war in which the Earl died fighting, but also like him believed that the English had crudely provoked it out of mere greed for a larger share of the overseas trade that the Dutch seemed otherwise on the verge of monopolizing. About Titus Oates, the shameless rabble-rousing perjurer who had all England in an uproar with his fabrication of "The Popish Plot," growing "so presumptuous as to accuse the Queene [a Roman Catholic] for intending to Poyson the King [Charles]," Evelyn concluded indignantly that "Such a mans Testimonie should not be taken against the life of a Dog." During Charles's entire reign Evelyn organized and managed, with his customary selfless efficiency, the accommodations for prisoners of war and wounded, and whenever money ran out—as it often did—begged and extracted more from the King or the Duke of Albemarle or whoever else was sitting on the royal cashbox at the moment; but he could almost be called a pacifist if such a term or notion had then existed: he never easily regarded war as an instrument of policy. When bigger and uglier bombs were invented and began to be used by navies against civilians, he didn't exult:

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> [July 15, 1694] My Lord Berkley burnt Dieppe and Haverdegrace with the bombs in revenge of the defeate at Brest: This manner of destructive warring begun every where by the French, tho' it be exceeding ruinous, especialy falling on the poorer people, and is very barbarous, dos not seeme to tend to make any sooner end of the Warr but rather to exasperate, and incite to revenge.

He disapproved of dueling at a time when nobody else of his class or higher seems to have questioned it: "[February 20, 1686] Many bloody and notorious duels were fought about this time, The D: of Grafton kill'd Mr. Stanley, bro: to the E: of Shrewsbery, indeede upon an almost unsufferable provocation: It is hoped his Majestie [James, who had been King only a year] will now at last, severely remedy this unchristian Custome"; and he tells an exemplary comic story about Sir William Petty, inventor, geographer, philosopher, all-round "virtuoso" (Evelyn "having never known such a genius"): "when Sir Aleyn Brodrick sent him a Challenge, upon a difference twixt them in Ireland: Sir Will: though exceedingly purblind, accepted the challenge, and it being his part to propound the Weapon, defied his Antagonist, to meete him with an hatchet or Axe in a darke Cellar; which he refusing, was laught at, for challinging one who every body knew was so short sighted."

He was one of the first members of a group for "the promoting of experimental philosophy" that soon was chartered as the Royal Society, and he remained an inquisitive and regular attendant at meetings throughout his life (he declined the Presidency on three occasions). Another member, and eventually President, was his friend the great chemist Robert Boyle, to whom he dedicated his book *Sculptura*, on the art and history of engraving. At the meeting of July 17, 1661 "Mr. Boyle brought 2 polishd Marbles 3 inch diameter: which first well rubb'd, then with a drop of oyle olive, which was afterwards cleane wiped off, the stones clapd together stuck close, even so close, that the nether stone having a hook inserted, and the upper a ring, tooke up 42 pound weight, by the power of contiguity, before they separated: The oyle was added to fill up any possible porositie in the polishd Marbles." Two days later "We tried our Diving bell, or Engine in

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the Water Dock at Deptford, in which our Curator continued halfe an houre under water: It was made of Cast lead: let downe with a strong Cable." They were scientists and engineers, not dilettantes, and they took their experimental obligations seriously.

He may have been the first conscious and aggressive environmentalist in history. His book *Fumifugium or inconvenience of the aer and smoak of London dissipated together with some remedies humbly proposed* (1661), dedicated to King Charles, laid the blame for the suffocating London smog primarily on the workshops of "Brewers, Diers, Soap boilers, lime burners" located within the city: "to what funest and deadly accidents the smoke exposes the . . . inhabitants!"; "I propose . . . that by an Act of this present Parliament this infernal Nuisance be removed five or six miles out of London at least beyond Greenwich" and out of the path of the prevailing southwesterly winds; and he recommended that a park-like green belt be established around the city, especially in the low-lying areas to the east and southwest, planted with sweet-scented trees, shrubs, flowers, and garden herbs "to meliorate the Aer about London." Charles was enthusiastic, and actually had Evelyn prepare a bill to be presented to Parliament; but—talk about being ahead of your time! Just think what the brewers, dyers, soap-boilers, and lime-burners, pulling themselves together after their apoplectic fits, must have screamed at each other and at the assembled Houses of Parliament regarding the ravings of this mad dreamer.

He was known to his family and descendants and to the eighteenth century as "Sylva" Evelyn because of his best-known book, *Sylva or a Discourse of Forest Trees and the Propagation of Timber in His Majestie's Dominions* (also dedicated to Charles), published in 1664, originating in a "Discourse Concerning Forest Trees" that he delivered before the Royal Society on October 15, 1662. The Commissioners of the Navy had invited a study of the "plantation" of trees as a source of timber for shipbuilding; and Evelyn responded in behalf of the Royal Society with this exuberant, ornate, pedantic, learned, informative, and practical discussion of the renewal, care, use, and beauty of forest trees: oak (his favorite), elm, alder, willow, fir, spruce, pine (which, because it exudes pitch

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and tar, he conjectures may have been the material for "that enormous stratagem, the so famous Trojan horse"), and so on; much revised and enlarged by Evelyn several times during the rest of his life, and considered an important book of reference for at least a century following. In 1664 he also published *The Gard'ner's Almanack, what he is to do throughout the year and what Fruits and Flowers are in Prime* (dedicated to the poet Abraham Cowley, who replied with complimentary verses). Evelyn had seen and admired most of the celebrated gardens of France and Italy; his own gardens (including the one trampled by Tsar Peter) were considered among the best planned, the best kept, and the most beautiful in England, were a sight to be seen, hence visited and admired by Charles and many other great persons over the years; and the instructions in his almanac are knowledgeable, thorough, and exact to the last precautionary detail: "water gently newly planted things from a convenient distance"; flowers, fruits, vegetables named and described by the hundreds month by month and chore by chore with the zest and pride of the lifelong nurturing gardener and husbandman.

He was never a knight in shining armor or an irrepressibly passionate man. A few weeks after Charles I had been forced to accede to the execution of Strafford (May 12, 1641: "the fatal Stroake, which sever'd the wisest head in England from the Shoulders of the Earle of Strafford, whose crime coming under the cognizance of no human-law, a new one was made, not to be a precedent, but his destruction, to such exorbitancy were things arived"), Evelyn left England for the Continent, having decided that the royalist cause was lost, and with several intermissions he passed the next ten years abroad. This was the decade of his twenties; and, for those to whom his all-too-solid virtues make him seem the sort of person who is born at the age of forty-five with salt-and-pepper hair and lives four-fifths of a century without growing a day older, it will come as a grain of comfort that his diary during this period is at its liveliest, most charming, and most nearly youthful. The point is that he doesn't fritter away his time in lugubrious exile, he's a full-out, cathedral-and-local-highlights, eighteen-hour-a-day, open-minded, bright-eyed tourist. Bright-eyed though not bushy-tailed.

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The concession has to be made and dealt with because Evelyn's two great British rivals, Pepys and Boswell, experienced in their twenties (as well as later!) and confided to their journals the persistent erotic preoccupations and activities which one associates with youth but which Evelyn never mentions or hints at. No doubt Evelyn was a more constrained and more guarded man than either Pepys or Boswell, and would anyhow have felt less free to express himself on such matters—if in fact they engaged him—even in a diary he didn't intend for anybody else's eyes. Still, the questions arise as much from what he says as from what he doesn't say. In Naples, on February 6, 1645: "We went by Coach to take the ayre, and see the diversions, or rather Maddnesse of the Carnoval; the Courtisans (who swarm in this Citty to the number (as we are told,) of 30000 registered sinners, who pay a tax to the state for the Costome of their bodys) . . . and indeede this town is so pester'd with these cattel, that there needes no small mortification to preserve from their inchantments . . . and some of our Company did purchase their repentance at a deare rate, after their returne" (the only time he brings up—but only in order to put it down contemptuously—the risk of sexual temptation). Four months later, in Venice, he presents his most extended description of local women:

> Ladys on Choppines about 10 foote high from the ground. [E. S. de Beers, editor of the complete edition of *The Diary of John Evelyn*, Oxford, 1955, notes about "choppines" on p. 446 of Vol. II that "Evelyn exaggerates their height, which probably never exceeded 1 ft. 8 in.," so that a woman something over five feet tall and wearing "choppines" would be "about 7 foote high from the ground."] These are high heeled shoos particularly affected by these proude dames, or as some say, invented to keepe them at home, it being so difficult to walke with them, whence one being asked how he liked the Venetian Dames, replyd, they were *Mezzo Carne*, *Mezzo Legno* [half flesh, half wood]; and he would have none of them: The truth is their Garb is very odd, as seeming allwayes in Masquerade, their other habite also totaly different from all Nations: They weare very long crisped haire of severall strakes and Colours, which they artificially make so, by washing their heads in pisse, and dischevelling them on the brims of a broad hat that has no head . . .

—and he describes "their peticoates comming from their very

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armepetts, so high that their very breasts flub over the tying place" and sundry other quaintnesses: "Thus attir'd they set their hands on the heads of two Matron-like servants or old women to support them, who are mumbling their beades: Tis very ridiculous to see how these Ladys crawle in and out of their Gundolas by reason of their Choppines"—all of it closely observed and amusing; but, except for the innocence, it could be Swift (thinly disguised as Gulliver) describing the Brobdingnagian women. "Finding my-selfe extreamly weary" he goes to a Venetian bath-house, where he is massaged with oils and depilatories and hot and cold water by "a naked youth"; but the treatment "did so open my pores that it cost me one of the greatest Colds and rheumes that ever I had in my whole life, by reason of my comming out without that caution necessary of keeping my selfe Warme for some time after": and that naked boy doesn't for a moment mean to Evelyn's impervious innocence what he would mean to anybody else, not only to Byron or Flaubert rampant in the low countries south of the Reformation but to thousands of far less cosmopolitan and sensation-seeking tourists before and after.

Not that he's in the least dull or phlegmatic; he has a quick sense of humor that relishes tall stories as well as stilt-like shoes; he is keen for idiosyncratic behavior, as when in Genoa he "could not but observe the suddaine and devlish passion of a sea-man who plying us, was intercepted by another fellow, that interposed his boate before him, and tooke us in; for the teares gushing out of his eyes, he put his finger in his mouth and almost bit it off to the joynt, shewing it to his antagonist, as an assurance to him of some bloudy revenge." Nobody of the time is more anachronistically sensitive to what will later be gathered under the rubrics of romantic terror and romantic beauty. "Some of these vast mountaines [in the Alps] were but one intire stone, 'twixt whose clefts now and then precipitated greate Cataracts of Mealted Snow, and other Waters, which made a tirrible roaring, Echoing from the rocks and Cavities, and these Waters in some places, breaking in the fall, wett us as if we had pas'd through a mist, so we could neither see, nor heare one another, but trusting to our honest Mules, jog on our Way: The narrow bridges in some

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places, made onely by felling huge Fir-trees and laying them athwart from mountaine to mountaine, over Cataracts of stupendious depth, are very dangerous, and so are the passages and edges made by cutting away the maine rock." Or, en route to Marseilles, "we had a most delicious journey . . . through a Country, sweetely declining to the South and Mediterranean Coasts, full of Vine-yards, and Olive-yards, Orange trees, Myrtils, Pomegranads and the like sweete Plantations, to which belong innumerable pleasantly situated Villas, to the number of about 15 hundred; built all of Free-stone, and most of them in prospect shewing as if they were so many heapes of snow dropp'd out of the clowds amongst those perennial greenes." Moreover, arrived in Marseilles, his impartial curiosity is instantly ready to descend to a description of the galleys and the slaves who man them: "Their rising forwards, and falling back at their Oare, is a miserable spactacle, and the noyse of their Chaines with the roaring of the beaten Waters has something of strange and fearfull in it, to one unaccostom'd. They are ruld, and chastiz'd with a bulls-pizle dry'd upon their backs, and soles of their feete upon the least dissorder, and without the least humanity: Yet for all this they are Cherefull, and full of vile knavery." Of course wherever he goes he notices what from his later career we comfortably expect him to notice and file away for future deliberation: the public library in Orléans; the smooth paving (with tile-like flat stones "of neere a foote square . . . onely 'tis somewhat hard to the poore horses feete") of the French city streets and country highroads (English streets still had bumpy and rough "pibbles" and the roads were dirt-and-mud); in Amsterdam "an Hospitall for their lame and decrepid souldiers"—"it is most remarkable, what provisions are here made and maintain'd for publique and charitable purposes, and to protect the poore from misery."

Evelyn married at twenty-six, apparently for love, and seems to have had a happy or at least serene marriage during its sixty years. True, during the first years he left his wife with her parents in Paris (where her father was Ambassador to France for the royalist government in exile) for periods as long as a year and a half without feeling a sense of deprivation or at any rate without confiding such to his diary; but

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since the bride was only twelve years old—a less shocking age for a bride then than now—it may have been that he was discreetly allowing her to grow up a bit. They had eight children who survived birth, of whom only two, a son and a daughter, survived their teens (one of the moving passages in the diary is Evelyn's outburst of grief at the death of his favorite, Richard—who died at the age of five, according to Evelyn a prodigy of learning and piety; and the evidence is sufficiently convincing). In her will, Evelyn's wife describes the "love and Friendshipp" her husband had given her for sixty years: "His care of my Education was such as might become a Father a Lover a Friend and Husband for Instruction Tenderness Affection and Fidelity to the last moment of his Life, which Obligation I mention with due Gratitude to his Memory ever dear to me." John, the last son, died seven years earlier than Evelyn, and it was John's son who became Evelyn's heir and the darling of his old age.

In his fifties Evelyn became friends with one of the Queen's attendants, Margaret Blagge, the twenty-year-old orphan daughter of a royalist army officer. At the Court of Charles II it would have been automatic for Evelyn to judge that to stay out of trouble this beautiful, pious, and unprotected young woman needed all the moral, spiritual, and practical support she could get: Margaret entreated it without coyness and Evelyn gave it. On October 16, 1672 they made an agreement:

> My Devout, and deare Friend declaring her condition to me for want of one she could trust, to govern and manage her competent stock; and earnestly desiring my poore assistance; I promised to do my best to serve her, and from that time forwards, I reckond her as my Child; for none did ever shew greater esteeme for a Father, than did this incomparable Creature to me, worthy of all the returnes I could ever make, for the many lasting obligations I received from her; a rare example of so much piety, and Virtue in so greate a Witt, beauty and perfection; This Miracle of a young Lady in a licentious Court and so deprav'd an age . . .

—and for several years they met once a week, whenever possible, for prayers and conversation: the relationship was open, and known to all. One secret, though, she kept from him: in their third year of friendship she contracted a secret mar-

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riage, about which he didn't learn till a year later, and then not from her and only by accident. He was deeply hurt, and said so, but a little coaxing and she had won him back. At the age of twenty-six, three years after her marriage, she died in childbirth ("I cannot but say, my very Soule was united to hers"); and years later Evelyn wrote for a lady at Court (whom Margaret had "loved above all her Sex . . . and who requested it of me") a saint's life of his beloved friend. Margaret's husband was Sidney Godolphin, many years later first Earl of Godolphin and that Lord High Treasurer of England who became (by Evelyn's unflagging solicitation) the patron of young Jack Evelyn and whose niece became Jack's wife.

The one quite startling glimpse we have of Evelyn occurs in the diary of his friend and companion Pepys, dated September 10, 1665:

> I to Captain Cocke's, where I find my Lord Brouncker and his mistress, and Sir J. Minnes. Where we supped (there was also Sir W. Doyly and Mr. Evelyn); but the receipt of this newes [Lord Sandwich's capture of some Dutch ships] did put us all into such an extacy of joy, that it inspired into Sir J. Minnes and Mr. Evelyn such a spirit of mirth, that in all my life I never met with so merry a two hours as our company this night was. Among other humours, Mr. Evelyn's repeating of some verses made up of nothing but the various acceptations of *may* and *can*, and doing it so aptly upon occasion of something of that nature, and so fast, did make us all die almost with laughing, and did so stop the mouth of Sir J. Minnes in the middle of all his mirth (and in a thing agreeing with his own manner of genius), that I never saw any man so out-done in all my life; and Sir J. Minnes's mirth too to see himself out-done, was the crown of all our mirth. In this humour we sat till about ten at night, and so my Lord and his mistress home, and we to bed, it being one of the times of my life wherein I was the fullest of true sense of joy.

On this magic evening Evelyn is almost forty-five years old but he sounds much younger, first among equals, man among men, not only as bright-eyed as ever but also bushy-tailed.

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JOYCE CAROL OATES

Dancer, Harshly Photographed

Improbably fixed
in mid-leap,
the muscles' will
suffusing
both her body
and the surrounding air:

A body become its own
sheer thought,
its thinking,
imperial will made flesh—
the muscular legs,
the outstretched arms,
the eyes' glaze of hunger.

(Hunger,
though not appetite:
collar and pelvic bones
pushing
through the leotard,
misshapen feet swathed
from view—)

No apotheosis
to come,
only another miracle
of a leap,
and another—
in defiance
of gravity and pain—
the pain
(as one might say
the breath)—

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the high-held head
supported
by a column
of tendons:
the body straining,
no longer young,
as the body's will
remains young—

"Do you dance
to create beauty?"
she is asked.
"Do you dance
to defeat
time, gravity?—
desire?"

But hunger
is mute,
has no language:
mute and terrible
the tension
of these legs, torso:
no apotheosis
to come—

This is flesh
nor am I out of it.

The Time Traveler

By degrees, days
and years,
another voice
intrudes.
Another presence.

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The facial skin betrayed
by old smiles.
Death's-head nostrils,
too deep.

Behind the eyes—
another inhabitant.
Candles entrusted
to trembling hands.

I don't recognize
that person,
you whisper,
who is that person?—
an old, old story.

In remembered dusk,
strolling behind
the boarded-up
train depot—
broken glass,
scattered papers,
weeds—
tall sinewy weeds—
but the flowers
tiny, pinched,
exquisitely blue—

To have the choice,
now, of picking a
mere
handful!—
a mere handful.

That old story
of our travels.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

Fragment

Who can know more deeply than I your loneliness there?
I saw you, I spoke, sometimes you answered.
It was, dear my mother, so very clear
that we touched only what we both knew has no words.
Three years you lay there. Wretched Truth, why did you
do this to us? No answer. Never. Futility.
Your aphasia seems to me like a little Lydian song,
a tree-song among the gleaming instruments.
Insurmountable the uselessness of words . . .

For Peg: A Remnant of Song Still Distantly Sounding

Only the English sparrows come
For the seed I put on my balcony
Here in the land of limbo. We are
Exiles, all of us displaced,
And Peg the one-legged sparrow
Is my only semblance, as Kazuko
From Japan is my only friend,
In limbo land.

Where are the chickadees, the juncos,
Jays, woodpeckers (downy and hairy),
Where the siskins, the little redpolls,
The snow buntings and pine grosbeaks
And crossbills and snowy owls,

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The evening grosbeaks, shrikes, nuthatches
(Bay-breasted and white), where are they
In desolation land?

Peg comes to the broad railing
For the millet seed and the sesame
Strewn by my winter-pallid hand,
Exotic seed calling his hunger,
And when he darts down his beak
To peck the seed he flutters his wings
To keep his balance on his one foot
In pollution land.

So his feathers are always fluffed. No,
We belong elsewhere. Yet we are here,
Ragged in our natural finery,
And our hunger is never fed. The native
Voices of song have sunk into the whine
Of tires on pavement, the bright feathers
Have broken and become the wind's dustings
In demoralization land.

Peg, Peg, petit frère, que vous
Êtes dérangé et perdu. The snow
In a March wind is blown slanting
On the parking lot, a color of sand,
A color of volcanic ash. The voices
Of extinction are confused. The jet
For Japan growls high overhead
In desecration land.

It's a strange communion in the parking
Lot of the shopping plaza. All creatures
Turn away from each other as if
Away from themselves on this Sunday
Morning. With our heads bowed, we stand
Ruffled in wind and hurting in snow,
Unbalanced, lost in the extraordinary climactic
Chaos of this land.

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The Oldest Killed Lake in North America

One night the water lay so deathly still
that the factories' constellated lights on the other shore,
the mills and refineries, made gleaming wires
across the surface, a great fallen sickly
and silent harp; and the moon, huge and orange,
shuddered behind the trembling many-petaled efflorescence
on the stalks of the chimneys, white mortuary flowers.
Really, from the highway to Liverpool on the nearer shore,
one saw the kind of splendor that lasts forever.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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CARL WOOTON

The Tick is Full

Mark felt the tick even before he opened his eyes and saw it. Its head was buried in his thigh and its body was dark and swollen, full of his blood. It had fallen from the elm tree onto the window sill and then onto the bed jammed up against the window. There was no screen on the window. His father had promised to put up a new screen, but he never had time before he left to go out to Wichita to see about a new job. That is how the tick got in. Mark's problem was how to get it out. He sat up and looked at it. It must have had its fill because it had stopped growing. He pinched it easy and gave it a couple of tugs. He did not pull too hard because he did not want to break it off and leave its head buried in his leg. He was afraid of tick-fever. He rested a minute and tried again. This time the tick just seemed to back out of its own accord. Mark threw it out the window at the barrel standing across the yard beyond the pump. When it hit the barrel it made a sound like a soft rock.

Nature called. He grabbed his pants off the iron footrail of the bed and rolled them up. He moved slowly to keep from waking his brother who still slept in the bed on the side away from the window. If he woke him they would fight. That would wake his mother and sister, and his mother would come into the room and yell at them. She would stay and look at them until her eyes started getting wet and cloudy, and she would turn away and leave the room, leaving behind her a wake of heavy, unspoken eloquence that he did not want to have to bear again. Not in the morning.

He eased out of the window, making sure there were no ticks on the sill, and dropped onto the grass. He wondered what time it was. The sun was on the other side of the house, but he knew the day was well started because the cloudless sky was so bright. He pulled on his pants and made a straight line for the path of planks that made a walkway to the privy.

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There were no ticks there, only spiders. Mr. Fields, the farmer they rented from, had warned him about the spiders in the privy. He had said to watch especially for black widows and, with an exaggerated laugh, added that he knew a man once who got bit on the end of his tallywhacker and it swoll up almost three times normal size. Mark never knew whether to believe Mr. Fields or not, especially when he talked about how popular that man had been for miles around until the swelling went down. But when he used the privy he looked around carefully and kicked the boards in front of the hole because Mr. Fields had said that scared the spiders away.

He did not see any spiders that morning. On his way back to the house he stopped at the pump, and with three or four motions of the handle, he started a stream of clear water that he caught in the cup hanging by a piece of baling wire from the pump. It was cold, the coldest water he had ever tasted from a well, and almost sweet. He lifted the pump handle again, gave it a slight nudge and let it fall slowly of its own weight and momentum. He held both hands under the spout until the thin stream filled them and then he splashed the water into his face. The shock brought him to standing upright sucking in breath.

He was turning to go back into the house when he heard the tractor coming fast. He liked the steady, high whining sound the tractor made when it was in the road gear. He liked the way it sounded and felt, especially when he sat on the seat, high off the ground, in control of the most powerful machine he had ever seen. He heard the tractor gearing down in front of the house and then the big wheels crunching the rocks used to fill up ruts in the driveway. It backfired once, and then the engine noise stopped. Mark walked around the corner of the house just in time to see Mr. Fields climbing down off the tractor.

Mr. Fields said, "Morning, Mark-boy. Your momma up?"

Mr. Fields always called him that—Mark-boy—and it always sounded to Mark like the man was imitating somebody he had heard once in a movie or maybe on the radio.

Mark said, "No sir. I'm the only one."

Mr. Fields said, "Well, Mark-boy, you better get her up. Your daddy called and he's gonna call back at a quarter past

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nine. It's probably after eight by now. It was three or four to when I left the house."

Mark said, "Yes, sir."

He turned to run to the house and stopped. He heard, saw, or maybe only sensed someone, something, movement no one else would have seen, and he knew his sister, Angie, had been standing in the shadows behind the screen door and that she was already on her way to wake up their mother.

Mr. Fields said, "You come with her, Mark-boy. I got some things need done around the yard."

Mark turned back and saw Mr. Fields was already up on the tractor. Just as Mark was about to answer him, the man hit the starter and even the thought of an answer was washed away by the explosion and roar of the machine firing. Mr. Fields waved at him and backed the tractor onto the road and drove off toward his house. Mark stood and listened to the buildup through the gears until the sound reached that high whine that levelled off and hung in the air like it was part of the boiling dust cloud thrown up by the big rear tires.

The back screen door slammed, and in a moment he heard the pump handle working. He walked round the side of the house and found his mother at the pump. She was bent over the bucket she had just pumped full and was splashing water onto her face. She had a little towel on her shoulder, and she was still wearing only her nightgown. Her hair was dark and straight, hanging down long, past her shoulders in the back. Mark watched her a moment. He thought she probably was pretty, but he did not always like being made to recognize she was a woman. It especially bothered him when grown men, like Mr. Fields' son, Herschel, talked about how fine she was.

His mother dried her face and said, "Isn't it a beautiful day?"

He said, "Yes, mam."

She said, "Your daddy's gonna call."

Mark said, "What do you think he wants?"

She said, "I don't know, but I hope it's because he found a job."

Mark said, "Does that mean we're going to move again?"

"Probably," she said.

"To Wichita?"

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"Wherever," she said.

Mark looked down at his feet. The conversation had taken a direction he did not want to follow. He did not like it where they were. He did not want to move again. He looked up at her.

He said, "Mr. Fields wants me to come with you. He has some work for me to do around the yard."

She stretched her arms out and up and reached back and fluffed her hair. Her woman's shape pressed against the cloth of her gown and Mark turned away toward the house.

She said, "You better eat something if you're going to work. There's some cereal. I think there's enough milk. Don't you and Angie fuss!"

He did not answer. In the kitchen he took the milk bottle from the refrigerator. The glass felt cool. It was not cold. Nothing was ever kept *cold* in that refrigerator. He got a bowl and a box of dry cereal from the pantry. It was not really a pantry. It was a packing crate that a large piece of furniture had come in. His father had brought it from town, stood it on end, put shelves in it and called it a pantry. His mother had seemed pleased with it, but when Angie had laughed at it, his father had gone out and walked down the driveway into the darkness. He came back after everyone was in bed, but Mark was still awake and heard his father and his mother talking in their bedroom. He looked at the stars through his window and now and then he caught a word or two, especially *Wichita*, but mostly he heard sounds like they were moving around a lot. He wished—had been wishing every night—they could live in a house that had rooms farther apart and doors and windows that could be kept closed, and he would not have to hear what went on between his parents, especially at night.

Angie came into the kitchen and saw the nearly empty bottle of milk on the table.

She said, "You took it all?"

He said, "Momma told me to eat 'cause I have to go to work."

"Work where?"

"For Mr. Fields."

She said, "I know what you're going to have to do."

"What's that?" he said.

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"Shovel shit," she said.

"Angie!"

Neither of them had seen their mother come into the kitchen. She carried a bucket of water to the sink.

She said again,"Angie!"

"What!"

"Why do you talk like that?"

Angie said, "Because it's true. Yesterday afternoon I saw that Herschel pulling a wagon full of manure into the front pasture. You know for sure *he* isn't going to unload it. Not when they've got Markie-boy here to do it."

She laughed. She was seventeen, three years older than Mark, and Mark thought he never could tell whether she merely despised him or hated him intensely, or why she acted like she was truly worried about him last winter when he had pneumonia if she despised him even a little bit. She was not quite pretty, he thought, and sometimes she smelled funny. He had shouted at her once to stay away from him until she took a bath, and his father took him for a long walk and tried to explain about girls' monthlies and how it was a terrible thing women had to put up with and men had to learn to put up with it too. She wore shorts and a halter that was pulled real tight he thought to show she had breasts even if they were small.

His mother said, "Mark, we have to hurry."

Angie said, "Markie-boy!"

"Stop it, Angie! Mark, get your shoes and wake up Will. Tell him to fill the barrel. Angie, when I get back I want those dishes done you was supposed to do last night."

Angie said, "I was going with you."

"You're staying here. And I want you started on those dishes before I leave. Mark, hurry."

Mark went to the bedroom and shook Will. He pulled a t-shirt out of a drawer and pulled it on. He took the pair of socks that he had worn the day before and had hung wrong-side-out over the back of a chair, and put them on. His shoes were under the bed, one nearly to the wall. He got them, put them on and shook Will again. Will sat up in a sudden motion and swung at Mark, but Mark saw the swing coming and jumped back.

Mark said, "Momma said you got to fill the barrel."

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Will said, "Why me?"

Mark said, "I got to go work at Mr. Fields' house."

Will said, "Doing what?"

Mark said, "I don't know. Just make sure you put that barrel in the sun before you start to fill it."

Will said, "Why I gotta fill it?"

Mark said, "Momma said so, that's why. Now get up."

He picked up his St. Louis Cardinals cap off the floor and put it on.

He said, "Put that barrel in the sun."

"Mark!"

"Coming."

The road was gravel, and a fresh load of rock had been dumped on it only a few days earlier. They walked on the when they could, along the ditch, but most of the time the edge of the ditch was either too steep or too full of milkweed and thistles. The sun was already up at a little more than a forty-five degree angle. If Mr. Fields had been with them he could have told them within a quarter hour what time it was.

Mark's mother walked in front. She had on a wide-brimmed straw hat to keep the sun off her head. She wore a thin summer dress that had tiny flowers all over it, and he could see all the straps of her woman's underclothes. She was thin, and she fought rather than stepped through the loose gravel. Her hair was pulled up under the hat, and small ribbons of dampness had already begun to form in the cloth of the dress on her back. Once she stopped and pointed at the fence on the other side of the road. It was covered with blackberry vines heavy with nearly ripened fruit.

She said, "It's going to be time to pick berries soon."

Mark said, "Not if we move."

She looked back at him. He caught her look and held it for a moment. There was something in her eyes that unsettled him. She stumbled and looked forward again. Mark looked up at the sun and the sky and thought about Will getting up without anyone except Angie there to make him do his chores right. He bet that Will would move the barrel next to the pump to fill it. That would put the barrel in the shade of the elm nearly all day and there would be no chance for the water to warm.

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They turned into the driveway that led to a large frame house that sat nearly a hundred yards back from the road. The fence that defined the front pasture ran along the drive to within forty feet of the house. And Mark saw Angie was right. The large flat-bed trailer stood in the middle of the pasture. A dark, irregular mound rose up from it, and he already knew how bad it was going to be, the sun already having worked on the manure for three or four hours. He could even see the thin handle of the fork sticking up out of the pile on the wagon.

Mr. Fields met them at the cattle guard that ran across the road where the front pasture ended and the house yard began. The old man held out a hand for Mark's mother to hold as she stepped carefully on the gapped pipes of the cattle guard. Mark wished he had thought of helping her. Mr. Fields took out a large pocket watch on the end of a leather fob and looked at it.

He said, "Nearly nine, Ma'am. You better go on into the house. The old lady's waiting for you. Probably in the kitchen. I'm going to get this boy started. Day's half gone and there's a whole bunch of work has got to get done. Come see, Mark-boy."

Mark watched his mother go toward the house. He had hoped to go with her, to be there when his father called.

Mr. Fields said, "You go on out to the front pasture. Herschel put a wagon of barn manure out there yesterday. Spread it all around, far as you can. You know how to do it."

Mark knew how to do it. He had done it before. The first time he had tried to work too fast in order to get off the wagon as soon as he could. For days his back hurt, his arms ached, and at night his legs went into spasms that he thought would hurl him out of bed. He learned to pace himself after that. He took smaller loads on the fork, bent his knees the way his father had shown him and used his legs to lift and throw. He thought it was the worst job on the farm, but somebody had to do it.

Herschel had said, "You doing it beats the hell outa me doing it."

On the wagon Mark took the fork in his hands and began to lift and throw the manure. He was glad he had remem-

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bered to put his cap on. There was no shade and the sun was well past the forty-five degree angle. He lifted and threw, trying to spread the loads around on the ground. He worked steadily and tried not to think about how his stomach felt about the smell and the flies that seemed all around him. He wondered about his mother and what his father was saying to her. He thought about Will and hoped he had put the barrel in the sun. He did not notice Herschel walking across the pasture toward the wagon.

Herschel said, "Spread that manure around good, boy."

The voice crept up the back of Mark's neck like the sound of a rake pulled across concrete. He turned and saw Herschel grinning up at him.

Mark said, "I know how to spread it."

"Just checking on you, boy."

Herschel said "boy" as though he was about to laugh every time he said it.

Mark said, "Why you checking on me? Ain't you got your own work to do?"

Herschel said, "Don't get uppity now. A three-dollar-a-day hired kid don't have much room for getting uppity."

Mark looked at him a moment. Herschel was a short man, and he had gray eyes that never seemed to focus on anything. He was strong. Whenever there was a problem with an animal, including the Guernsey bull Mr. Fields rented for stud, Herschel handled it. Mark was a little bit afraid of Herschel, not so much of his strength as his strangeness. He was always talking about women other than his wife, and he pestered Angie every chance he had. And when he and Mark worked alone together in the barn he talked about his parts and teased Mark, asking him if he had a man's parts yet. Mark turned away from the grin and the eyes that seemed to be looking somewhere else and picked up another load on his fork and threw it.

Herschel said, "Hey, boy, you think your sister's a virgin?"

Mark said, "I don't know."

Herschel said, "How 'bout you, boy? You a virgin?"

Mark jammed the fork into the manure, and Herschel laughed. It was louder and deeper than Angie's laughter, but it had almost exactly the same mocking tone hers sometimes had.

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Mark said, "What you laughing at?"

The laughter stopped, choked off, and Herschel's face was red. He took a dirty handkerchief out of his overalls and wiped his forehead with it.

Herschel said, "I'm laughing at you standing up there on that wagon pitching shit."

Mark put the fork into the soft, moist manure that was held together by pieces of hay, dirt, and feed, and lifted it up. He threw it out in the same general direction he had been throwing it, but a little closer to Herschel. Herschel stepped back.

He said, "What the hell you doing, boy?"

Mark turned his back to Herschel and stuck the fork into the manure again.

Herschel said, "You better watch where you throw that manure, boy! You hit me with any of that, I'll come up there and wash your face in it."

Mark picked up another load on the end of the fork. His back was still turned to Herschel, but he knew Herschel was watching him. He bent his knees and made a slight jerking motion to adjust his grip on the handle of the fork. Herschel backed up, tripped and fell. Mark strained and threw the manure forward onto the ground on the side of the wagon opposite from Herschel. He stooped, picked up another load and threw it forward again.

Herschel picked himself up off the ground and said, "Too bad you're moving, boy. I was hoping you'd stay around awhile. I figured I might get to hear your sister's cherry pop."

Mark did not turn around. He lifted another load of manure, but it was too heavy to throw. He shook some loose, threw the load, and stumbled a little. One foot jerked too far forward and his shoe was covered with brown and green muck. *Moving*. Now he knew why his daddy had called. *They were*. He did not notice Herschel leave. He had known it probably would happen. *Again*. He had heard his father and mother talking about it at night. Once he had thought he had heard his mother crying. He could not be sure that was what he heard, but much later that night he was still awake, looking at the stars through the holes in the elm, and hearing it

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again. It was like the sound of the wind that stirred the leaves of the elm, but softer.

Women's voices came from the house yard. Mark saw his mother and Mrs. Fields standing outside. His mother walked away a few steps, turned back and spoke to Mr. Fields, walked away and turned back again. He watched her. She was too far away for him to talk to her. He wanted to know what his father had said. He thought of Herschel learning before he did what his father's message had been, and he jammed the fork down too hard and stuck it in the wood bed of the wagon. He worked it loose and began again to lift and throw. He glanced between each load to see where his mother was until she disappeared where the blackberry vines were the thickest along the fence.

He worked faster, and with each fork full he measured what he had left to do. He wanted to go home. He wanted to hear his mother talk about what his father had said. He jabbed, lifted, threw. Sweat ran down from under the band of his cap, and he wiped at it with his arm. The sun moved higher, was nearly straight overhead when he heard the tractor and turned and saw Mr. Fields driving toward him. He scanned what was left on the wagon, looked up at the sky and knew it was lunch-time. He needed ten minutes. Mr. Fields drove the tractor up to the side of the wagon and sat with the motor running and watched Mark. He waited until Mark threw the last fork of manure onto the ground.

Mr. Fields shouted, "It's dinner-time, Mark-boy"

Mark nodded against the roar of the tractor, laid his fork down on the wagon bed and stepped onto the frame of the tractor. He stepped up to a narrow place beside Mr. Fields and held on to the seat as Mr. Fields put the tractor in gear and eased it forward. He drove slowly into the barnyard and let Mark off at the water trough in the empty pen nearest the house. Mark understood, and he turned the valve on the spigot over the trough. He put his head under the flow of water coming from the pipe. The water was not as cold as the water he had pumped from the well at his house, but it cooled him. He let it flow over his arms and hands. He turned just in time to see Herschel coming toward him holding out a towel and a bar of home-made soap.

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Herschel said, "Full of shit, ain't you boy?"

Mark took the soap and rubbed it in his hands and up and down his arms. It was rough and stung the inside of his arms, but it got him clean.

Herschel said, "I put your towel on the trough. Hurry up." A huge sycamore shaded the front corner of the house. Under the tree there was a wooden table and two benches streaked with dirty, gray scabs that had once been white paint. Mark's plate and a glass of milk were already on the table with a knife and fork wrapped in a cloth napkin. He ate: roast pork, potatoes, gravy, slaw, peas, more than he could hold comfortably. He had hardly finished when Mr. Fields and Herschel came out the kitchen door and walked toward him. Mr. Fields sat across from him and Herschel slid in on the bench next to Mark.

Mr. Fields said, "Had enough, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

Herschel's hand clamped on the fleshy part of Mark's thigh, right where the tick had been. Mark squirmed and looked down at his plate. He felt tears coming into his eyes, and he knew without seeing him that Herschel was grinning. It was a game Herschel liked to play. Mark dropped his fork onto his plate and Herschel let go. Mark looked up and wondered whether or not Mr. Fields knew what was happening under the table. Herschel's hand stroked Mark's thigh twice, then patted it, and Mark squirmed away from him.

Mr. Fields said, "Herschel told you your daddy said you're moving?"

Mark said, "Yes, sir. To Wichita."

Herschel said, "Where the hell is Wichita, boy?"

Mark knew where it was. After the third or fourth night he heard his father and mother talking about it, he looked it up on an old U.S. road map his father had brought home. It was a long way from Indiana, across Illinois and Missouri. It was going to be a long ride, even if Illinois was a narrow state on the map.

Mark said, "In Kansas."

Mr. Fields said, "Your momma said he's got himself a real good job in an airplane factory."

Herschel said, "How come your daddy don't ever stay with

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nothin'? How long you think you'll be in Wichita before you move again?"

Mr. Fields said, "Leave him alone, Herschel. What his daddy does isn't your business."

Mark slid off the bench, picked up his plate and utensils and carried them to the little stoop at the kitchen door. His thigh hurt him, he could still smell the manure in his nostrils, and he wanted to go home to help his mother pack. He turned from the stoop and collided with Mr. Fields. Mr. Fields grabbed Mark's hand and pushed a crumpled bill into it. It was a five. He usually paid him only three dollars and never before until the day was over.

Mr. Fields said, "You better go on home. Your momma needs some help. Tell her I'll be around later to see if she needs anything from town."

Mark mumbled a thanks, shoved the money into his pocket, and started for the front pasture. When he was with his mother he used the driveway and the road, but when he was by himself, he cut diagonally across the front pasture and climbed the fence. He was already thinking about what he had been told and wondered how they could possibly move tomorrow. He pictured the map and the highway that wound toward Wichita, and he knew that even if his daddy drove all night, he could not get home in time to leave *tomorrow*. He walked along the fence until he was well past the line that would have taken him near the wagon and the spread manure and turned toward the farthest corner. He was a little more than halfway when he heard the sound of the smaller tractor, of Herschel's tractor coming behind him. He did not look around. He broke into a run for the fence, but he was not quick enough. The tractor with Herschel sitting on top of it pulled in between Mark and the fence. Herschel was grinning.

Mark said, "What you want?"

Herschel said, "I want you to do something for me."

"What?"

Herschel took a folded piece of paper out of his shirt pocket and leaned down to hand it to Mark.

Mark said, "What's that?"

Herschel said, "Take it. Take it, boy. It ain't nothing gonna hurt you."

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Mark reached up and took the paper from Herschel's hand. He looked at it and started to unfold it.

Herschel said, "Uh-huh. It ain't for you. That's for your sister. You take that to Angie and don't you read it. You read it and I'm gonna find out about it and I'll take meat out of your leg next time."

Mark said, "What's this for?"

Herschel said, "Never mind. Just bring it to her, but don't you let nobody else see you giving it to her. And I promise, I'll know if you don't give it to her just like I said."

Herschel pulled himself back up straight on the seat of the tractor, released the clutch, and the tractor jumped forward. Mark felt the movement of air caused by the tire almost taller than he was rolling inches in front of him. The tractor was just past him, and he took off on a run for the fence. The blackberry vines tore his shirt and the barbed wire scratched a hand. He got over the fence, jumped the ditch and tried to run in the new, loose gravel. He fell twice, picked himself up and moved to the side of the road where it was easier.

He stopped to catch his breath and realized he still held the piece of paper Herschel had given him. He opened it up, and at that moment he knew that Herschel's threats had guaranteed his reading the note, that he would have crawled through fire and a whole army of South American soldier ants that eat everything in their way just to read the note. It said: ANGIE. TONIGHT AFTER YOUR LIGHTS GO OUT. THE OLD BARN. H. Rage flooded over him. *H*! As though Angie would know who that was, as though she had been familiar with him before. He stood on the edge of the road and looked up at the afternoon sun, a large white ball of fire that seemed nearly to match what was happening inside him. Tears of fury streaked his cheeks. His thigh where the tick had drained his blood and where Herschel had squeezed it hurt him. The smell of manure mixed with dirt and straw and covered with green flies came rushing back at him. And above all of it he saw Angie running across a thin wisp of cloud in the pale blue sky with Herschel, dark, powerful, chasing her toward the dark purple of a distant thunderstorm.

"Mark! Mark!"

His mother's voice called him. She was standing in the road

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by the mailbox. He shoved the note into his pocket and ran through the loose gravel of the road toward her.

She said, "How come you're not working?"

He said, "I finished spreading the manure and Mr. Fields said you needed help. He said we had to leave by tomorrow."

She said, "That's right."

He said, "How can we do that? Daddy can't get back from Wichita that fast."

She said, "He's not in Wichita. He called from St. Louis. He'll be home tonight, if he doesn't have any more car trouble."

They walked toward the house. *Tonight.* He thought about the note in his pocket and wondered what their father would say if he knew Herschel Fields was sending notes to Angie, was planning on meeting her at a place like the old barn late at night. What if Angie was away from the house when their father came home? *Tonight.* He saw the barrel standing next to the pump in the shade.

He said, "Look at that! Will put the barrel in the shade."

His mother said, "I'm sorry. With everything I had on my mind I just didn't pay any attention to what he was doing. I'll get you some clothes. Looks like you need shoes, too. Just drop those dirty ones in the bucket by the steps when you finish."

Mark looked at the barrel. Will had filled it to within inches of the top, and that meant the water was cold enough to take away breath, cold enough to make lips turn blue. Even if it had sat all day in the sun, the bottom would be cold, but now, after sitting only a few hours and in the shade, there would be no part, no depth that would be bearable. The kitchen door slammed shut and Will came toward him carrying clothes and a towel and soap, the same harsh soap that Herschel had brought to the trough. Will came within a few steps of Mark, dropped the bundle and ran back to the house yelling, "Momma!"

Mark shouted, "You better run!"

He stripped and threw his dirty clothes in a pile. Taking a bath was awkward. The upright barrel was too tall to step into, and he wanted to hurry. He picked up the soap and lifted himself up and into the barrel and let himself down slowly

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into the water. The cold exploded through his body. He felt his scrotum shrivel. The water came up almost to his armpits and he tried to fight against the consciousness of the pain by jumping up and down. He rubbed himself with the soap as quickly as he could, submerged once and pulled himself up and jumped out onto the ground. His flesh looked like a fresh plucked chicken. He heard somebody giggle and turned around only to see nothing more than movement behind the screen door. It was Angie. He kept himself covered in the front with one end of the towel and wiped at the rest of his body with the other end. He was not dry, but he dressed anyway, picked up his dirty clothes and remembered the note. He fished it out of a pocket, dropped the dirty clothes into the bucket beside the back steps and ran to the privy. He pulled the door shut behind him and threw the note into the hole.

Angie was in the kitchen taking things out of the cabinets and putting them on the counter and table. Mark found his mother in her bedroom. Her bed was covered with clothes. Drawers were pulled out and a half-dozen empty boxes took up most of the bare space on the floor. His mother looked tired. She folded clothes slowly and laid them on the bed in stacks, as though the decision of what else to do with them was at that time more than she could handle. Mark promised himself he would spend whatever it took to help her get ready for moving.

She said, "Help Angie in the kitchen. And leave Will alone. I got enough to do without having you two start up."

When Mark returned to the kitchen, Will jumped toward one end of the long table that filled the center of the room. Mark ignored him and watched Angie stuffing newspaper in glasses and placing them in boxes. He thought Angie's eyes looked strangely red and puffy.

He said, "What's the matter?"

Angie said, "Nothing. Here, you do this. Do the glasses first, then the other dishes. Be careful. Pack them tight."

He said, "You've been crying."

Angie said, "Mind your own business. *Here*. This oughta be easier than shoveling cow dung."

She handed him a glass and a piece of newspaper. He took

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them and looked at her. She had a bright yellow barrette in her hair, but she wore no make-up. Mark liked her better when she wore no make-up. He watched her and he knew he had done the right thing with the note. He thought she may not be very pretty, but she was too, too fine for somebody like Herschel Fields. He finished wrapping the glasses she had put out on the table and looked about for something else to do.

Angie said, "Daddy found a house."

Mark said, "I hope it has a bathtub *inside*."

Angie said, "I just hope it's in town and not stuck twenty miles from nothin' in the country."

They worked steadily the rest of the afternoon. Their mother moved about packing, directing them, giving them new jobs as they were about to finish others. Mark worked and watched Angie. Most of the time they worked well together. Once Mark tripped, juggled the bowl he was carrying to her, stumbled forward and finally got his balance and set the bowl on the table. Angie laughed, and it made Mark feel good because it was not mocking or taunting laughter. He laughed, too, picked up the bowl and acted as though he would go through the routine again. They both laughed, and Mark had to set the bowl down to keep from dropping it. They had to stop working, and they laughed only because they were tired and because they were laughing together. Mark put out his hand as though to keep from falling, and his hand landed on Angie's shoulder. They were still laughing when he embraced her. Angie pushed him away, stopped laughing, and began packing dishes again, all, it seemed to Mark, in more or less the same motion.

Mark was outside getting water at the pump when Mr. Fields drove into the driveway in his pickup truck. It was still light, but the sun had fallen behind the row of trees that hid the old barn from the house. Mark went to meet him.

Mr. Fields said, "Your daddy called again, Mark-boy. He's not gonna get here 'til real late, maybe not 'til after midnight. His water pump busted in Effingham. Tell your momma I'll come back in the morning to settle up everything."

Mark said, "Where's Effingham?"

Mr. Fields said, "Somewhere in Illinois."

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Mark thought of the shape of Illinois on the map and tried in his mind to picture just where his daddy might be with a busted water pump.

Mr. Fields said, "You're a fine boy, Mark. I wish you were staying."

Mark said, "Yes, sir," because he did not know what else to say.

Mr. Fields backed the truck down the driveway, and Mark waited until it was in the road before he ran to the house. He told the others what Mr. Fields had said. They all continued to work, but what had been plain fatigue quickly became complete exhaustion. They worked and watched the clock on top of the refrigerator. They strained to make the time pass faster.

Finally their mother said, "That's it. Enough. We'll finish in the morning."

Angie and Mark protested but not strongly. Their mother promised to wake them if they were sleeping when their father came home. They discovered that Will had already given up and was unconscious in his bed. Mark climbed over Will and lay against the wall. He brushed off the window sill, and through the holes in the elm he watched the stars. There were two very close together, and he imagined they were himself and Angie, twinkling, moving across the cloudless dark sky.

A dog barked somewhere, and another answered. Then the second one barked again, and Mark recognized it. It was Herschel's small mongrel that yapped in a high whiny voice and ran away if anyone ever turned at him and said boo. He watched the moon, a three-quarter ball of light with shadows made to dance by the elm leaves moving only slightly in the air, and he heard the yap again. It was closer, from the wrong direction, and Mark knew that Herschel was going to the old barn to wait for Angie. He held his breath and listened. The dog yapped and stopped too suddenly, as though it had been cut off in midyap, and nothing else made a sound except the crickets. Herschel was waiting.

Mark grabbed his pants, leaned over the foot of the bed and found his shoes. He eased out of the window, dropped to the grass, and stooped against the side of the house and lis-

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tened. Nobody stirred. He pulled on his pants and put on his shoes without any socks and went down the line of planks and past the privy. The grass in the field was wet with a heavy dew. He headed straight for the tree line to the west where the sun had gone down and where the moon was already aiming. The three-quarter ball hung in the sky and, with the stars, made it easy for him to find his way. When he came to the windrow, he stopped and caught his breath. From the darkest shadows of the trees he saw the old barn not more than thirty yards away.

The old barn looked frozen, a shape of light and dark grays, lines that ran into and met somewhere in shadows that seemed to hold their breaths. Nothing moved. The stars and the moon gave off a light that gave him a slight chill even though the night air was still and full of heat. An owl hooted in the woods a hundred yards or more on the other side of the old barn, and there was movement in the shadows farthest to his left. Herschel's mongrel ran into the light and came straight for him, found him and began circling and yapping. Mark tried to move around a tree into even deeper shadows, but the dog shifted with him. It was smart enough to stay just out of reach of Mark's foot. The heavy door of the barn creaked open, and Mark saw Herschel coming toward him. He ran to the next tree.

Herschel said, "Don't run. I've got something good for you."

Mark retreated to another tree.

Herschel said, "Come on out, Angie. You know you want it. That's why you came out here."

Mark turned and ran, tripped, fell, got up and ran again until he realized that he was out of the shadows and in the light. He stopped and turned back toward where he heard Herschel running. Herschel stopped, too. He stepped out of the shadows and took a couple of steps toward Mark until he realized it was not Angie who had come to meet him.

Herschel said, "What the hell are you doing here?"

Mark backed up a couple of steps. Herschel matched his movement forward.

Mark said, "I came to tell you you not doin' anything to my sister."

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Herschel stared at him and then threw his head back and laughed. It was the strangest laugh Mark had ever heard. His legs suddenly were weak.

Herschel stopped laughing and said, "Okay, Markie-boy. You want it instead, that's okay. Hell, yeah."

Herschel lunged at Mark, but Mark was quicker. The lunge made Herschel lose his balance and he fell spread out on the ground. Mark ran. He did not know where he was running. He went around the old barn and his own blood pounded in his ears and his breath came in gasps that sounded like screams. He heard Herschel coming behind him, heavy-footed, muttering curses. The little dog ran after him, circled him, snapped at his heels, ran back to Herschel and caught up again with Mark, yapping all the time. Mark crossed the one wooden fence remaining behind the old barn and ran for the woods. He looked back and saw Herschel coming over the fence and then veering off to his right. Mark had made a mistake. He remembered the ditch and the barbed wire fence that ran along the edge of the woods. There was only place he could cross the ditch, and Herschel had in a few steps cut him off from it. He stopped. Herschel stopped, and they faced each other.

Herschel said, "Got you now, Markie-boy. Your ass is mine."

There were still twenty yards between them, and Mark turned and ran back toward the barn. Mark reached the fence and was up on the first rail with the little dog scooting under him and yapping and jumping at him when he heard the sound of boards cracking and splintering and Herschel yelled. The dog jumped high and turned in air and before its feet touched ground it was running toward where Herschel had cried out. Mark looked and could not see Herschel. Not more than twenty yards away, the little dog ran in a ten or twelve foot circle, yapping at the ground. Mark let himself down from the fence and walked toward the place the dog was circling. He saw the broken boards first, a row of rotted planks set side by side to cover a hole. Herschel's heavy step had been too much for the boards brittle from rain and sun bleaching and rotting them out. Then he smelled the stink. Herschel had fallen into an old privy hole that had never

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been filled up, probably left there when the barn was abandoned. The little dog jumped on Mark, not snapping now, just jumping and running around yapping at the opening where Herschel had disappeared.

Then he heard the sound, a low, soft moan coming from the hole. The dog went into a frenzy. It yapped and leaned so far forward that Mark thought it would fall into the hole. He heard the sound again, louder, and the moan turned into a roar.

"Get me out of here. Help me!"

Mark moved to the edge of the hole and looked down. He saw something move, something large, deep in the darkness of the hole, and heard it splash in water.

"Get me out of here. There's things down here. They're crawling on me. Get me out of here. Markie! Markie! Help me!"

Mark said, "You're gonna hurt me."

Herschel said, "No! I promise. Get me out. I'm drowning in shit! Come on, boy!"

Mark said, "What can I do?"

Herschel said, "Beside the barn, they's some fence posts that wasn't ever used. Get the longest one and bring it here."

Mark climbed the fence and looked alongside the barn. He almost missed them, but there were a half dozen or so long posts lying in the weeds next to the building. Mark pulled three or four of them out, took the longest one and dragged it back to the hole. The dog still yapped and Herschel was making slapping sounds.

When Mark looked over the edge again, Herschel yelled, "What's keeping you, boy? They's leeches down here sucking my blood in all this shit. Oh, damn!"

Mark said, "What do I do?"

Herschel said, "Put one end down here. Easy. Hold on to that other end. Don't let it fall on my head."

Mark lowered the post into the hole. It was hardly halfway in when he felt Herschel's strength pulling on it.

Herschel said, "Don't let go dammit."

Herschel was wedging one end of the post into the side of the hole. Mark felt Herschel's weight almost tear the post out of his hands. He dug his heels into the ground and hung on.

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In a moment Herschel's head and shoulders appeared above the ground, and Mark wanted to run. Herschel must have realized Mark's fear because he screamed, "Don't let go!"

Herschel pulled himself up onto the edge of the hole, and Mark felt the release of the man's weight from the other end. Mark turned the pole loose and ran to the fence, climbed over it, and hid in the shadow of the barn. He watched Herschel moving around almost like he was doing a little dance, slapping at himself, until he suddenly started taking off his clothes. Mark learned that Herschel did not wear underwear. When he took off his overalls and his shirt and his shoes and socks, he was left standing naked in the pale, washed out light of the waning moon. He pulled at things on his body.

Herschel said, "Leeches!"

Suddenly Herschel kicked his clothes into the hole and walked away across the field toward the gravel road. Mark thought he limped. The little dog ran ahead of him and back to circle his heels and ahead of him again. Mark watched them until Herschel became a dark, indistinct figure in the distance. Mark thought he could tell when Herschel reached the fence that ran beside the gravel road, and then Herschel disappeared.

Mark walked back to the house, and the first thing he noticed was that his father's car still was not there. He walked around the house to make certain no one was awake. He stopped by Angie's window and looked in. She lay on her bed uncovered. She wore the pale cotton nightgown she always wore, and her hair lay loose and spread out on her pillow. She turned toward him, moved as though to stretch, then curled up, her knees almost up to her chest. She breathed easily. Her body rose and fell in a slow, rhythmic motion, and Mark caught his breathing matching her rhythm. He watched her only a few minutes and moved away from the window afraid she might wake and see him. The moon was gone and few stars remained. The night was darkening with heavy clouds that moved rapidly across the sky. He had no idea what time it was, but he knew he was not going back to bed.

Through the field on Angie's side of the house he could reach the path that ran alongside the road up the small hill to where could see the headlights of cars traveling the paved

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highway. He walked easily, looking now and then up at the sky and wondering if it was going to rain. At the top of the hill he sat and leaned against a fence post and waited. To his left the hill sloped easily back toward the house where his mother and Will and Angie slept safely. He could see the windrow beyond the house, but the barn behind the line of trees was out of sight.

He looked at the dark outline of the house and thought of Angie lying in her bed, sleeping, breathing easily with her knees tucked up under her chin. For only a moment he saw again the ugliness of Herschel's face and heard the heavy-footed sound of Herschel running after him, but it all disappeared when he saw the headlights turn off the highway onto the gravel road. He jumped up and ran onto the road. He had forgotten about the tick that had stolen his blood, and the weight of the fork loaded with manure pulling on his back and arms, and the smell of the hole Herschel had fallen into. He was already thinking about the days ahead with no more Herschels and Angie safe and all of them moving to Wichita. He had never been happier in his life than he was right then, standing in the middle of the road with his arms over his head flailing about wildly in rhythm with his heart.

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DANA GIOIA

Eastern Standard Time

Yesterday the clocks went back an hour,
and now, leaving work a little late,

I walk across the parking lot
where it's already dark and empty,

empty on a scale only the suburbs
could afford—thirty acres of smooth,

black asphalt, lined symmetrically by rows
of identical, bare-branched trees—tonight

more of an idea than a landscape,
a vast blueprint vandalized by autumn.

Shades of Callimachus, Coan ghost of Philetas
It is in your grove I would walk!

Instead I cross this familiar, blacktopped lot
feeling out of place, a Californian,

a stranger to the darker seasons,
walking through the end of an Eastern fall.

I have learned to tell
the changes that prefigure storms:

the heavy air, the circling wind
and graduate darkness, but still

each time the air goes through even these
accustomed changes, I grow uneasy.

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Sudden storms, shifts in temperature, even snow
in midwinter still surprise me,

unable to feel at home in a landscape
so suddenly transformed.

Anxiety in Autumn! O Suburbs of Despair
where nothing but the weather changes!

Sometimes the saddest places in the world
are just the ordinary ones seen after hours.

Picture a department store at night
with the doors locked and lights turned off

or a beachhouse in the winter
dark and shuttered by the sea.

Walk through a stadium after the game
or even a parking lot everyone has left.

It's cold. The wind is blowing.
As far as I can see, there are leaves—

dry, brown, curling on themselves,
ankle-deep in places, and everywhere

sweeping across the numbered rows,
arranging and rearranging themselves

some only to swirl up and fly away,
others to scratch along the asphalt.

They are alive. Swarming in movements
only they can understand.

And suddenly I realize the obvious:

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that even this parking lot

was once a field. A field
sloping to the valley where now

the Interstate is running.
How much older they are, the leaves

just fallen
tracing out these shapes from memory.

His Three Women

I

Her frequent letters are like childhood friends:
He understands their silences. No deep
Mystery clouds her cursory approach.
She loves him openly and wants him back.
In the mornings when he tries to work,
Everything that happens—from the way
The sunlight draws its silhouettes from dust
Drifting in the window to some turn
Of phrase he comes across while reading—makes
Him think of her.
How maddening to have
A constant woman constantly in mind.
Yet how much worse when she can only fill
The waking mind, an obsession in the morning,
A memory at night, an absence in his dreams.
There is every reason he should love her
Except that love will never come from reason.

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II

Her short, reluctant letters seldom come,
And their misspellings tell him very little,
But with solid scholarship of lust
He finds a dozen hints in every line
To justify his loyalty.
More beautiful
Than blushing reason can approach in comfort,
Her form refutes each judgment of her mind
That he has made. He doesn't understand her
But has explored his memories and studies
The single photograph which he possesses
Like the scene of a murder
Whose mysteries have never been resolved.

III

Somewhere not far away
A dark-haired woman he has never met
Unpacks the last of her heavy trunks
Wondering sadly what she left behind
And in the stillness of a settled past
Forgets the future's infidelity.
Nervously she marks out her domain
And walks around the newly-rented rooms
In which the unexpected
Presses like the air outside her windows,
Moving invisibly through every crack
Into a life resumed in this new city.
Suddenly she catches her reflection
In the silent, unconfiding mirror—
A lonely woman in an empty room.
She turns away, but sick of indecision,
Accepts its present tense as permanent,
And falling on the unmade bed, her hand,
Which has not touched him yet, turns out the light.

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Parts of Summer Weather

The window open and the summer air
drifts slowly through the darkened room.
The curtains lift enough to see
a starless night and heavy moon.

Upstairs a radio plays out
the songs we've overheard together
so many nights now that they seem
like one more part of summer weather,

And under darkness and the breeze
with sheets and blankets stripped away
we lie in silence saying more
than anything we hoped to say.

And yet I wake an hour later,
reach out and find myself alone.
No words spoken, no message left,
the room so quiet, and you gone.

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KATE JENNINGS

The Night Watch

That awful start as you realize you're
awake: how very like terror it feels!
Is it three, or four? How well you know
by now the tricks of time: one's still
early enough to (please God) sleep deeply
again; two and three can go either way.
Four, and you settle in to listen while
the church bells chime the hours away
in quarters. At five you might as well
get up: the night's done, now, for you.

So that first waking hour's always spent
wondering what time it is while the window
refuses to pale. You're too hot, then
cold: chills, fever shivers, sweats.
How like terror! Would it be better
to get up and turn on a light, to read,
to drink coffee, wine, brandy, warm milk?
Would anything help? Would a soft light
help? Would knowing what time it is help?
You invent God, and pray. What woke you

turns out to be your familiar rank ragbag
of anxiety and remorse. Useless to try to
slow your thudding heart with reason, or
lull yourself by counting your blessings.
You study the nagging lists of old griefs,
remembered shame, regrets. And you're not
getting any younger. You wonder if it's
anywhere near dawn. Pain, and no possible
good to come of it, no redemption, no end
in sight. Nightly. And night after night.

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The Gifted Dreamer

You can know just so much; then something else
takes over. Take, for instance, the sleeper

dreaming, her eyelids fluttering as she moves
through all the phases and depths of a good

night's rest. She goes to bed for dreamy ease
but some nights finds sleep unlocks the crazy

closet in her head: in fact some nights she
dreams bad dreams, terror yeasting inside her,

when all she thinks she wants is to be dead
to the world, a numb slumbering bulb. She

notices she dreams with equal frequency of
falling and flying. Now she tosses and

turns over, rummaging, and is high-wire
walking on a bridge cable, the sickening

swoop as she risks a glance at the cars
below and the bay even further below.

Dreams are gifts you can't refuse. She
trawls the pool of memory, fights those

half-forgotten guilts that seem to dare
to emerge only in sleep, the subterranean

surges of sexuality, the hard currents (the
bay? down there?) that run only vein-deep

but so well hidden by day. She twitches as
though she were flying, or falling. She has

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strange conversations with people she thinks
she loves. Struggling with the tangled quilt,

burrowing and muttering into the muffled lumpy
pillow, our dreamer's having a restless night;

and will wake, blinking, to harsh morning light.

The Dark Side of the Moon

The hedges are shrill with both
soft and tin whistles that might
be the wind, and might not be.
Mice search for some safe place
to escape the cold and are less
likely to find warmth than swift
springs, snaps, or venomous bait.

Our kitchen floor's so dirty we
stick to it, and the wind that's
rattling the hedge bottoms is
ruffling the swamp's surface

The strangest sadness abroad, so
many mice gnawing at the quick
traps, is it cheese or poison

Our kitchen floor's so clean
we skid on it, and the wind
that's rattling the hedges is
ruffling us, making us shift

and sigh uneasily around our
banked fire. We pick up books
only to put them down unopened.

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The strangest sadness abroad, so
much not done, the evening ease
flown, and the sunset hangover
a weird ague: the dark side

of the moon. I wander out to take a
closer restless look at total sheer
unrelieved night and is that a shape

moving off to my right, perhaps one
of those hungry mice, or a stalking
cat, or a sleeker, smoother other?
I try to tell myself sternly No,

it's nothing, you're just out
for a breath of fresh air, and
I try (the house is cozy and lit
and warm: Go!) to face the night
squarely as though it were simply
a familiar whom I both admire and
fear by the moon's lack of light.

Postcard

The wind was so strong we had to huddle
to picnic, the ground rocky with acorns
our boots crushed and squashed while we
shared cheese and bread and pears and
paper cups of wine. Done, we stopped to
step into a cornfield at just after noon

in early October in silence to listen to
wind rattle the dry stalks and brittle
husks, soft tassels long gone, the hard
kernels fit only for the pigs' corncrib

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now, the sky a high blue pale as chicory
overhead, the road to our right choked

with weeds and dust, sticky Queen Anne's
lace and bursting silky milkweed pods.
The wind raised the dust and pushed us
into the speckled cornstalks, muffling
an ominous and curiously quiet crackle
and crunch of muck and mulch underfoot.

JOHN BALABAN

Landscape with Three Mountains

A mountain. Another. And still a third.
Who was so skilled to carve this craggy scene:
the cavern's red door; the ridge's narrow cleft;
the black knoll bearded with little mosses?
A twisting pine bough rocks in the wind,
showering a willow's leaves with glistening drops.
Gentlemen, lords, who could refuse, though weary
and shaky in his knees, to mount once more?

[*A translation of the Vietnamese poem by Ho Xuan Huong*]

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JESSICA TREADWAY

And Give You Peace

When the waitress comes, my sister asks her if they serve hamburgers in this restaurant.

"Well, we have the sirloin platter. Number Five," the waitress says, leaning over to point at the menu.

"What is that, basically?" Sue asks.

"A hamburger."

Sue looks at me from under her bangs, and I can see her rolling her eyes. "I guess I'll give that a try, then," she says to the waitress, whose badge tells us her name is Nora.

I order the lasagna and settle back in the dark red plastic of the booth we've chosen, close to the window, with a view of a squat Manufacturers Hanover branch across the street and Antonelli's Pizza on the corner. This is the town we grew up in, and nothing has changed since we moved out. Before our father and youngest sister died, the four of us used to order take-out from Antonelli's about once a week, because our mother had left and taken the family's cooking skill with her. Now Sue and I have not been to Antonelli's for months. And I don't know about her, but I never even eat pizza anymore. The smell of the sauce is a physical memory—reminds me always, with a quick thump of nausea, of those nights we spent hunched around the TV, eating pizza straight out of the carton while we watched reruns of Lucy and Get Smart, which was our father's favorite. He always used to get red stuff on his chin, laughing at Max when he dialed the phone in his shoe.

"It'll be a year, soon," Sue says casually, letting the ice in her water glass chink against her teeth. She's right; and I guess I had been thinking about it, but not in the front of my mind where things can hurt if you think about them too much. I reach for a breadstick and rip off the cellophane with a crackle, then split it in half and hand over one of them to

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Sue. "Thanks," she says, and white crumbs fall down the front of her blouse.

I pick up my fork and make little stabbing taps on the tablecloth. "I wish she'd hurry up with the food," I say, even though I know that if Nora actually appeared at that moment with our orders, I could not eat a thing.

This is the way they died: our father went into Meggy's bedroom on a drizzly July morning, and shot her in the back of the head with a gun none of us had ever seen before. Then (all of this came from the police report afterward, when they had talked to Mr. Hausler next door) Dad walked around the house for a while and then went outside to trim the rosebushes; but after he trimmed them he cut the roses off, too. Then he went back inside the house and at some point he wrote a letter, and then he stood in his own bedroom and shot himself, putting the barrel of the gun to his head. Nobody heard anything, no gunshots, no screams, no bodies falling. Sue found our father when she got home from a party that night, and the police found Meggy when they came a few minutes later. It wasn't until the next day that the police gave us the letter, which began: "By the time you read this, Meggy and I will be in a better place . . ." The woman on the TV news said the letter was blood-spattered, but actually it was very clean, considering, with only a light trace of something reddish and pale in the top corner. It was folded neatly, and originally it had been addressed to Joan-Sue-Meggy, but then the "Meggy" had been crossed out and the sentence about the two of them being in a better place had been scribbled at the top of the letter. I don't know where it is now. I suppose our mother got rid of it after the funeral, or the police have it somewhere as evidence.

"How much do you think about it, now?" Sue asks me. She is fiddling with the cellophane the breadsticks came in.

I shrug and feel I should lie, but I don't. "A lot," I tell her. "You know? A lot."

She nods and looks down at the table, and a brown curl falls into her eyes. Always, before, she would be constantly doing something with her hair as she spoke—twisting it around her finger, sucking on a braid, tucking side pieces be-

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hind her ear—but now she just lets it hang there, as if the effort to push it aside is not worth the trouble. "I know what you mean," she says, and lets her voice slide low. "Sometimes I can go a whole day without remembering, like when I'm at school and there's a lot going on, a lot of people around and we're all having a good time. I can tell jokes to people and watch TV and write a paper, and if somebody else wants to talk about something—like Danielle in the next suite, who broke up with her boyfriend over Christmas—I can sit there and listen, and I won't start to cry even if they're bawling all over the place. But when it comes time to go to sleep, I wish . . . God had never invented the nighttime. I lie there and begin to feel myself letting go, and then right when I think I'm about to fall off, it all comes rushing back at me. Like there's somebody standing over me with a hose, just waiting to blast me with cold water the minute I start to forget."

Now Nora brings me my salad, plunking down the small wooden bowl on top of the breadstick crumbs dotting the tablecloth. "Don't I get one, too?" Sue asks, seeing there is no other salad on Nora's tray.

"Only with pasta," Nora tells her. "Otherwise, it's extra."

"Well, I think that *sucks*," Sue says loudly. I am amazed; my sister has always been softspoken, and modest in her language. "I just think it sucks that I can't get a goddam salad with my dinner," Sue continues. Nora looks embarrassed, and I feel sorry for her.

"Bring her one and we'll pay the extra," I say under my breath, as if Sue is a child to be mollified in order to avert a scene. Nora starts to move away, scribbling on her pad, until Sue calls her back.

"Never mind," she says. "I'll just take some of hers." She leans over to pick out the carrots and radish pieces in my bowl, because she knows I don't like them and she does. "This is something you can only do with a sister," she says to me, smiling, and in that meaningless instant I remember that I love her very much.

She's probably just nervous, I tell myself, being back here, and remembering. It was my mother's idea that I should try to talk to Sue, although it was my idea that we come here to

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do it. Mom is worried about her, says there's something not right about the way she looks, or the way she has been acting. "I don't think she's told anyone at school about what happened," Mom told me. "I don't think it's healthy." It's true that Sue does not look all that well—she's lost weight, and her face, even in the mornings, is drawn and weary. There is something forced in her voice when she speaks, and she smiles mechanically, without mirth. It occurs to me that she needs only to laugh a little. "Mark told me some jokes the other day," I announce hopefully. "Wait—let me think of how they go." I press my fingers to my forehead and try to remember the punch lines. Mark is my lover. He started out being just a good friend, the brother of a girl I roomed with at school before moving off campus, this past semester, with money I got when our father died. Last summer, when it happened, Mark and I were working together in the bookstore on campus when the police called and said there was an emergency. Mark drove me home, getting there in three hours when it normally takes four, and he stayed in town for two weeks after the funeral; I knew he was there even though I did not want to see him. We became lovers one weekend in the fall, after school had started up again. The first part of the weekend I spent crying and punching him and throwing up in the wastebasket, but by Sunday I was letting him close his arms around me, and then I was giving more to him than I had thought possible for me to give, and losing myself so thankfully in something larger than grief that I ended up crying again, and then we fell asleep crying together.

"What did Grace Kelly have that Natalie Wood didn't?" I ask Sue now, grateful that the jokes have come back to me, because I have promised them.

"I give up," she says, dutifully.

"A good stroke. Why didn't Natalie Wood take a bath on the yacht?"

"Oh, God!" Sue says. "I don't know."

"She preferred to wash up on shore." Sue groans and snickers simultaneously, exposing her teeth in a wide appreciative yawn. I had forgotten how much I missed her. This is the first time we have been together, without other people around, since we went to visit the graves over Easter break.

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Usually, when we are at our mother's house in Auburn (the house we grew up in, here, where our father and Meggy died, was finally sold eight months after they carried out the bodies), Mom is always flitting around, asking us if we need anything, not letting us out of her sight, as if she is afraid of what we might do while she is not looking. If she has to go out to the store or the dentist or something, she tries to make sure her husband will be around to keep an eye on us. Paul is a little man with a quiet voice, and I don't know what he could do to Sue or me if we got it in our minds to do anything, but for the most part we keep to ourselves and let them both believe they are protecting us. We never talk about the shootings, and if the subject ever threatens to come up—like a finger pressing gently, testing an exposed wound—one of us always manages, at the last minute, to snatch the conversation back safely to the weather or the merits of Mom's Hungarian goulash.

Across from me, Sue has caught her breath sharply and is craning her neck to see out the window. "There's Linda Eppelman," she says, softly, pointing through the glass at a stocky girl walking down the street, her plastic clogs flopping on the sidewalk. Linda was a friend of Sue's in high school—could it have been only a year ago, last June, that they stood next to each other on the gym risers at their graduation, singing "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" with the rest of the choir? Like most time recalled with regret, it seems impossible. Do you know that hymn? The words move across the music with a sharp, sweet pain, which (once felt in chorus) stays as memory in your bones:

"The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord lift his countenance upon you,
And give you peace
And give you peace
The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
And give you peace."

We watch as Linda stops to read the menu posted outside Antonelli's, counts the money in her pocket, and goes inside. When the screen door shuts behind her like a slap, we can't see her anymore.

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"Don't you want to go catch her when she comes out? Just to say hello?" I ask.

Sue twists back around in her seat and sighs. "No," she says. "I thought I would, for a minute, but now I don't think so." She pushes her lips together as if deciding she will not speak again, but then amends and adds, "It might make her uncomfortable, you know?"

Meggy was a softball player. She played on the team sponsored by Rodney's Refuse Service for three years running, fielding at first base the first year, then moving up to pitcher when she was thirteen and fourteen. We all used to go to her games at the park, after supper on summer nights; I mean, Sue and I went together, and our father would come if our mother wasn't going to be there with Paul. They sort of worked it out by unwritten alternation—our father would come on weeknights, and our mother would be there for Saturday morning games. It took her longer to get there, because she lived that much farther away.

Last year, the year she died, Meggy decided she didn't want to play anymore. She told our father it was because she wanted to spend her summer evenings at the park pool, but he didn't believe her and kept bugging her until he made her cry, and then she said, "Okay, okay, if you really want to know, I can't stand going to games knowing you and Mom are afraid you'll see each other there, it makes me sick that you can't even look at each other and smile, it makes me want to throw up." Then she threw her laundry-battered Rodney's Refuse cap at him in a little fit of drama, and went outside to sit on the swings. Later, she told Sue and me, she overheard our parents talking on the phone; our father was nearly in tears, and begging our mother to come back to him, saying the divorce had been too much for her, Meggy, to handle. "But *he's* the one who can't handle it," she'd told us, in the room she shared with Sue, with the door closed and the radio turned up loud. "I can deal with it just fine."

"Remember Meggy's softball uniform?" I say to Sue. The food has come and Nora sets it down in front of us, moving cautiously as if she's afraid Sue will bite her hand off. Steam rises from my plate and films my sister's startled face, and I

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realize we have not said Meggy's name out loud, to each other, in nearly a year.

But Sue seems relieved that I have brought it up. "The way she washed the shirt so many times, so the letters would fade out?" she says. Meggy had always been embarrassed to wear "Rodney's Refuse" across her chest. "She always wanted to play for The Golden Fox, remember?" A restaurant in the city.

"Yeah." I bite into my lasagna and then swallow it quickly. "Remember whenever we played Crazy Eights, the loser had to smell the winner's feet for a whole minute?"

"I *should* remember—I broke a blood vessel in my nose after she beat me one time."

"And that night you guys were babysitting for Timmy Griffin, and to make him go to sleep Meggy sat on his eyelids to keep them shut."

"They never asked us back after that, but he was a little brat anyway."

"Yeah, I remember." I take a sip of milk, and then I have to smile. "Listen to us. Talking about Meggy. Dr. Avery should be here to see us now."

Sue's face darkens. "I never liked that woman," she says, reaching for the ketchup.

Dr. Avery was the shrink our mother made us go to last summer, beginning a week after the funeral. Mom herself had to see the doctor, but that was in the hospital, where they took her for two weeks after she got hysterical at the church service—she started screaming and crying and calling out Meggy's name, and she threw her handkerchief at our father's coffin but it fell before it touched the wood, so she started taking her clothes off and throwing *them*, before Paul and Uncle John grabbed her and took her outside. Dr. Avery was on call that day and admitted our mother to the psychiatric wing of the hospital, where they saw each other two times a day for the next two weeks. Sue and I went less often, twice a week to Dr. Avery's office, sometimes together and sometimes separately. She was always comparing us to things: when we wouldn't say much to her (because it was so fresh and we did not want to give it away), she said our anger was like rice boiling over a pot on the stove, spilling down the

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edges with nothing to catch it up. That one killed me. She just wasn't someone I felt like trusting, personally, but I did not feel nearly as strongly as Sue, who for some reason was very hostile to the doctor. I remember Sue asking her if she didn't think oatmeal would make a better emotional metaphor, because it was so much messier than rice, so much harder to clean up.

"I didn't like her much, either," I say to Sue. She nods approval, shreds of lettuce peeking out of her mouth. "But Suse—there *were* a couple of things that came up, when we talked, that I always meant to ask you about . . . but I just didn't."

She looks at me suspiciously—maybe fearfully is a better word—and stops eating. "Like what?"

"Well, for one, I always wanted to know if you blamed me for not being there," I say. "When it happened? I mean, my deciding to stay on campus last summer and work? You pretty much had to do everything yourself, and take care of Meggy, and everything."

She makes a face and tilts her water glass back, receiving the last sliver of ice to crunch between her teeth. "That was nothing," she says. "If I could have stayed away, I probably would have, too."

"It didn't have anything to do with you or Meggy," I tell her. "It was all just Mom and Dad."

"Oh, I know," she says, nodding. "That's—you know. I understand."

"Okay," I say. For a few minutes we eat in silence, finishing our food. It could end here, but there is something else I want to ask, something I need to know to fill a blank space, a space now filled with a furious red terror in my dreams at night. Actually I am afraid to hear the answer, but I ask anyway. "What did it look like? When you found Dad?" I say. "I mean—just what did it look like?"

Her mouth drops slightly, and she pushes her lips hard into the napkin in her fist. For a moment I am afraid she may run from the booth, because the table gives a quick tremble under her hands as she brings them away, slowly, from her face. But then she is still again, and her fingers, when she grips her fork, are calm. "I can't talk about that,

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Joan," she says, and her voice is a combination of apology and horror. "Just please don't ask me again, okay?" Then she changes the subject. "Do you think the waitress would be very upset if I didn't finish my fries?"

But no, as it turns out, Nora isn't upset, in fact is probably very glad to escape unassaulted by Sue, as she whisks all the dishes from the table with a flourish, letting silverware clatter on the tray as it falls. Sue and I both move to take out our wallets, but I make her put hers back. "At least let me leave the tip," she says, and tucks four dollar bills under her empty water glass. When she sees my surprised look she defends herself: "Why not? I mean, for putting up with *me*."

In the restroom she uses the stall first while I look in the mirror and knead the skin around my eyes, which look old and tired even though I don't feel either of those things. I look closer to thirty, instead of twenty, and this is curious because Sue has changed in exactly the opposite way, she seeming to have lost age in her face and taken on a deliberate, safe innocence, like Meggy's. "Joan?" Sue says to me. I wait; behind the stall she is crying, the short choppy cry of a just-punished child. "Don't come in," she tells me, as I put my hand on the door.

"What, then?" I say, alarmed.

"I just want to ask you what you think," she says, and her nose is stuffing up. "Do you think he would have killed me, too, if I hadn't gone up to the lake, for the party? They said he didn't shoot himself right away, after Meggy. Do you think he was waiting for me?" Just saying this seems to scare her, and her voice rises high on a choked breath.

It is probably not smart, I think, to let her know that I have wondered this myself. "No, Suse," I say, and hope I sound convinced. "I think what he said in the letter was true—he thought you and I could handle it, his killing himself, but Meggy . . . well, you know how he always felt about her." I pause before adding, "And I think Dr. Avery was right when she said he got kind of crazy at the end, and nobody could have guessed what he would do." This seems to help. I can hear her blowing her nose into a wad of toilet paper, and the crying sounds have stopped.

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"Okay," she says. Her voice is tired, spent, but sounds freer from the strain of dread that's been there recently. She takes a deep breath, and a leftover sob escapes in a comical gasp. "Attractive noise," she says, self-mocking. "Listen, about the waitress, and the salad thing, I just want you to understand. Sometimes I get like that—I get mad at people for no reason, and I blow up at them, and I can't do anything about it. You know?" I nod, forgetting she can't see me. "Joan?" she says, again.

"Yes," I answer, thinking of Mark, of feeling the breathless punch in my chest slow down when he touches my hand. I want to tell Sue what is out there waiting for her, but what can one person tell another about this? About what starts up, again, when the worst of the hurt is over? "Hurry up, Suse," is all I say, "I have to pee." This is something you can only do with a sister.

When we come out, two women have taken our booth, and walking toward them I recognize the fat one with a sharp stutter of breath. She is Mrs. Hamm, who used to work with our mother in the junior high library. It's too late to pass her by, because she has recognized us, too, and her eyes are briefly startled, then filled with thrill and pity. "Well, *Joan*," she says, catching my eye, calling us over to the table with a wave. "How are you, girls? This is my sister-in-law from Syracuse, Phyllis Hamm. Phyllis, this is Joan and Susan Rickover." She pauses for breath and surveys us curiously. "How *are* you, girls?" she repeats.

"Fine," Sue tells her hollowly, leaning toward the door.

"Rickover. *Rick*over." The sister-in-law is tapping her fingers on her forehead, scrunching up her face. "That name sounds so familiar."

"No it doesn't," Mrs. Hamm tells her abruptly. A sudden spastic move of her body makes me believe she has tried to kick the other woman, under the table.

"But I could *swear* . . ." the sister-in-law says, clearly frustrated.

"Don't knock yourself out," Sue says. "Our father killed our little sister last year, and then he killed himself, and it was all over the papers, so that's probably how you know our name.

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Yes, that was us," she continues, as the woman looks up at Sue with a horrified look on her face. "By the way, that necklace you're wearing is so adorable I could just puke." It is a thick gold chain supporting a round blue bead, with a butterfly painted in the middle. Meggy had barrettes just like it. Sue says all this very calmly and turns to leave, and I follow her outside, as if this were a normal thing that had just happened, as if she had just told the women she was majoring in English and to try the sirloin platter.

"That wasn't the right thing to say," she says, when we are out on the sidewalk in the hot gray haze of the June twilight. "I know that. I know it. Joan, do you think there's something wrong with me?" She stands on the corner with her hands thrust deep inside her jeans pockets, letting her hair hang into her worried eyes.

"No," I tell her, though I cannot explain why. Just: "No."

"Okay," she says. There is a pause. "Look, I would never go back to Dr. Avery," she begins, "but there *is* this guy at school, in the counseling office, who seems—nice. I might go see him, when classes start again."

"That's a good idea, Suse," I say, trying to sound casual, so as not to let her know what a really good idea I think it is.

"Well, I'm *thinking* about it," she says. We are about to move toward the car when we see a line of kids on bikes whizzing up the street toward the park, riding no-handed, with bright towels rolled up and tucked under their armpits. The pool must have just opened for the season. The kids are young, Meggy's age, some of them Meggy's friends, both boys and girls, who came to the funeral as a group and sat in the back of the church, and left soggy wads of Kleenex in the pew. I recognize a few of them as they ride by, shouting to each other over the whirr of many pedals: "I call the first dive!" "You don't even know how to dive, pansy-ass." "Is Sharon meeting us there, or are we picking her up?" Sue and I look down at the sidewalk as they pass by, and I know both of us are thinking about Meggy's blue bike, a present from our parents on her twelfth birthday. After Meggy died our mother gave the bike to Holly Leibman down the street, on the condition that Holly wouldn't roll the odometer back to zero, but save the miles Meggy had left there.

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"Remember how that used to be the most important thing?" Sue says, when the kids are out of sight. "Going to the pool after dinner in the summer? Remember how George at the snack bar used to get us free Nutty Buddies? Oh, God—I actually remember telling Dad I was going to *kill* myself, if he didn't let me go that one time."

"But he did," I say, finishing the story. Across the street, somebody in Antonelli's flips on the red neon PIZZA-BEER light above the window. Our eyes snap to the familiar sign like fireflies to a lamp. "You don't feel like getting a pizza, do you?" I ask, and Sue looks at me with surprise for an instant before she knows I am only kidding. For the first time in a long time she *really* smiles, meaning it, relaxing the tight, about-to-vomit look around the corners of her mouth.

"No," she says, resting a palm on her stomach, then reaching up to shove her hair out of her eyes. In front of the dingy sun she looks as if she might dare to believe, again, that this is the best place and time to be. "I've had enough, for now."

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FREDERICK POLLACK

From *The Abandoned Man*

1

After the robbery, I sat
each night on the floor by
the window he had used.
Hiding,
I neither read nor smoked.
When necessary
I scuttled regretfully to the john and back;
when exhausted,
I turned on the light,
shut the window,
turned off the light.
The days shortened.
The thin white curtains drifted,
lit by "a harvest moon";
my mind ran on the phrase,
little else. At last he came.
Young and skinny.
The eyes following
the long fingers groping over the sill
bulged. He
hesitated
(perhaps he sensed me, not admitting it),
dropped, stood. I
jerked on the cord; he fell;
my hidden net fell on him.
He screamed once. Stank.
Kneeling on him, I brought
both wrists into the grip
of my left hand; crouched;
bit slowly through his ear,

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enjoying the blood; then slapped him
once, twice, but not hard:
he had to listen.
I started confusedly, knowing
I'd warm to it: "You'll joke about this
on your filthy streetcorners,
won't you. You know that
litany you have: 'Yo *face*! Yo *face*! Yo *mama*! Yo *face*! Yo *face*!
Yo *mama*!' You see I've listened—"
I
paused. The eyes were white. "Or that odd hysteria
where you hook into the rhythm of
a phrase, and repeat it: 'I'm gonna whup his *ass*!,' then
something-something-something 'but I'm gonna
whup his *ass*!' " I
knelt more heavily. "At other stages
of your . . . maturation, I've noticed, also, you
circle—sort of dance—and if the
other is reluctant to fight, you
shout 'Gimme mah *nut*! Gimme mah *nut*!'—
same word for violence and orgasm,
interestingly.
Afterwards, I suppose, the knife phase . . .
I want you to know
how totally I despise you." I
smashed him across the face again: "That's for my stereo.
That's for my television.
That's for a life of fear.
That's for Cora
in her lobby in New York.
This one's for Frank
and the shit on his floor
among his books. And this is for Sondra
who will never be sane again
or make love again, after
what happened. They never caught theirs, but I have you."
Then
blows and choking without names,
but a doubt among them
like the breeze from the window behind us:

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was he the right one?
did that mean something?
Weary, I opened my hands . . .
there was no one. Nothing.

3

The fourth winter . . . As it waned
they left their flats
where they had sat
watching electric heaters glow. Rallies
would come with full spring, if
students and
the local Left still cared (they would care); and on
the Fourth of July,
our mournful silent vigil on Rathaus Square
where they would see
how many they were. But now,
for them only
grimed snow melting
on flagstones and cobblestones;
blonde lovers (yet not blonde
primarily—mousy curls, high
cheekbones; what Slavic or Teutonic drift had
accidentally issued into decency?)
in parks, on boulevards, the few
looks they could spare
blandly pitying. (Blame, satisfaction in
some older eyes, mostly
not.) Watery sunlight. The language
less strange each passing year (this itself terrifying), all its
umlauts, crossed o's resolving
into ads,
its dream-slurred consonants clear enough
when heard in lines for ration-stamps. Back from the south
I looked up
my friends, watched them thaw. My friends are
older than I; I prefer real

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despair, even cynicism, to the correct
or incorrect poses of
my age-group, collapsing towards dawn into
worries about parents (imprisoned,
or fanatical, disowning)
and apathy, when someone mentions money.
Frank Demuth
was the first I ran into, at a café/bakery we
frequented near the Museum. My former
comp. lit. prof.
"All winter I expected
someone," he said, his
yellow, sideways smile on me, "though God knows why,
I haven't been
active since I left. And when he didn't come, I was
disappointed . . . As if the cell would be
warmer than my flat. Do they fly us home
in chains, I wonder—" "No," I said,
"these days, I gather, they
settle matters here." He
nodded: "If I weren't afraid
of pain, I'd go back, I think, sometimes . . . I'm getting old,
I have to face
pain. If it came at their hands
I could be angry again, even
brave. Because outrage and courage
are life—they can even bestow,
I recall, a sense of community." "I feel that
here," I said, shocked. "Don't you?" He
murmured something about
the "kindness of strangers," asked
where I'd been. I described
nights under bridges, among
lumpen comrades
in shantytowns, or on the floors of student friends; CIA types
I'd spotted in Naples and Düsseldorf (no one
had shot at me, or spotted me
I thought, though I am never safe
from distant cameras);
and the publishers

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whose gleaming, Bauhaus-revival offices I'd entered, after somehow
washing. I couldn't keep from
offhandedly boasting: cold and hungry, I had
traveled, and survived, even triumphed—
for us, of course, for him and all of us; wasn't that
"courage"? "You enjoyed yourself," he
smiled. I shrugged. "I liked Germany," I said, "they're so
punctilious. They enjoy the role
they're in, vis-à-vis us. The intellectuals, at least."
"Land of freedom," he said
wonderingly. "You know, when they left this country,
on May 4, '45, candles were lit—
spontaneously—in every window,
except, of course, those of collaborators." He scanned the blocks
of apartments opposite—laundry hanging
in spring undress—as if seeking
the ghost of those lights. "It'll be a great anthology,"
I said firmly. "Poems and stories from
all our settlements, appearing simultaneously
in seven languages. Oh, and I've obtained some
wonderful underground
material, smuggled out via Mexico City. We can expect your
Introduction, I hope, by July?
If we're still here,"
I added. It was a piety
I often forgot, these days. "We'll be here,"
the old professor sighed.
"Or wish we were. An essay, yes,
you'll have my essay." He ran down.
"Anything," I urged. "It may not be
the ringing declaration
you'd like," he said, "more a Meditation among the Tombs—
Europe suggests such. You know,
each spring I become
more and more European—
café ironies
were always easier here, they made up for

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health, wife, job, homeland
because they had to. Here come the Feinblatts." Phil and
Ruth
peered, sidled in. (They had also been
teachers.) We didn't rise,
Frank and I, though it felt like that—the reaction when
someone's been tortured. (Ruth,
and within sight of Canada. Yet Phil was the
fallen-to-pieces, enraged one.) She
squealed, seeing me, he
merely nodded. They resent me because
I have a job—of sorts—but mostly because
I'm active. (And were they
spies,
informers, any of them? Family left behind,
pressure . . . I shrugged
the thought from me.) "We were damned cold,"
Phil was saying. "I have evidence that
the Ministry
turned off our heat—all the emigrés
in the Project. They want to kill us. They
know we're
weakened, some of us, and sick, and we dare not
complain. We're an embarrassment,
finally. They're bowing to pressure." Then he coughed,
from
age and cold and rage. Frank
soothed him. "Did you meet any nice girls
on your trip?" Ruth asked me. I
had, but berated her: "I was busy.
I'm trying to put this
exile anthology together. I was essentially on the
run a lot of the time." "I've always said these
Scandinavian girls—or the French, of course—" "I didn't get
to France," I said. "We're not wanted." "—or even the
Germans
are nicer
than American girls. Really gentler and . . .
nicer. I've always said that."
Old, mechanical tears. I looked
hesitantly at Phil. He touched her hand, not

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looking. They live in one room
in a project south of town. "Let me show you—"
I said into silence,
opening my briefcase. "From
home?" Phil asked,
eager, then angry at himself.
I spread out
the leaflets, the photos,
pointed in the leaflets
to the quotes
from Phil's speech, Ruth's book of
ten years back. But they saw only the photos
and I was aghast
at my insensitivity: laden
boughs of Southern trees, that
thing in South Boston, with the grinning people
around it, people
throwing rocks at shopwindows;
one blurred shot
of the Texas camp with the chimneys. "They had to do it,"
whispered Phil. "It
fascinated them. They can't bear to be outdone." But Ruth
kept turning the photos: breadlines
(in the leaflets
the story about breadlines to which
no one returned, whole slums cleared in a night).
  Marching
kids, mouths wide with song. "I saw this,"
Phil announced. "When they started shoving
safety-pins through their cheeks and wearing black I
saw this." He glared at me.
Gingerly I turned the photo. The President
on television, seen from some freezing,
filthy room. "Despite everything," I said,
"they're still talking individualism,
healthy competition." "That's their idiom," said
Frank, almost
fondly. Silence set in.
I had wanted them
to admire me for bringing back
these images, but they didn't ask

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what would be done with them. They weren't
interested in the leaflets. Seemed
cut off from
words, tears and me. What had only
stranded me, after all, had
driven them, and I gazed
at their slumped shoulders, much
moved: "You'll go back,"
I said. "This can't go on
indefinitely. Cheering classrooms
will welcome you. You'll be honored and avenged." "Oh
my dear,"
Ruth said softly, "you're so ridiculously young."
I left them
at the café, visited
others. When I went home
that evening, there were men in my room. One shut the
door
behind me. All the books
lay torn and strewn on the bed
and floor, my posters were knifed, my table
overturned and all my papers
being examined by one
who sat in my chair. Faces from home,
I thought. Calm, pasty,
without rage or
enthusiasm; neatly dressed,
of no particular age;
they could do this sort of thing
forever, in room after room,
city after city. One held
my arms, one held
the gun, the one in my armchair
looked up at me at last.
And so we met.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Postmodern Patriarchs

TWO OLD MASTERS OF THE AVANT-GARDE, David Gordon and Douglas Dunn, gave concurrent performances at the height of the spring season in New York. Gordon played two weeks at Dance Theater Workshop, while Dunn had a week just around the corner at the Joyce Theater. A dozen years or so ago they both belonged to the Grand Union, the improvisational collective that became an incubator of postmodernism, and they still compose with a tremendous trust in the intuitive process though their goals now are far apart. Gordon sets and rehearses his material very carefully to reproduce the timing and uncertainty of a spontaneous event. Dunn takes away as many conventions and restraints as possible to release all the choreographic overtones normally suppressed by structure and refinement.

Gordon's new evening-length piece, *Framework*, is an extended manipulation of elements he has been polishing for several years: the verbal-visual pun, the story that reveals itself in fragments, the disturbingly intimate suggestion that turns out to be even more disturbingly depersonalized, the clever overlapping repartee of words and movement. Gordon was an early exploiter of the signifying value of performance. He seems to see movement and words as linguistic cohorts, capable of taking on meaning from each other or of becoming simply abstractions. He sometimes allows these aural and physical message-units to show forth in disarming frankness; at other times he snatches an idea from its initial trajectory and reroutes it via an alternative definition. Gordon, in fact, has used the movement-word combination in almost every way except for direct narrative reinforcement, such as conventional mime. Many younger choreographers have followed him into this territory, which has proven accessible to information-hungry but kinesthetically naive audiences, but no one has been as skillful or as coherent as he in charting it compositionally.

Framework is a series of solo and group variations on a general theme of how people maintain their social life while working within a small, close community. This community might be a dance company, Gordon's Pick Up Company in fact, just as the central character played by Valda Setterfield might be Setterfield in real life—or might not. The "story" expands and contracts until all eight dancers are implicated in questions of partnership and responsibility, and

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the potential that performing has for both intensifying and neutralizing sexuality.

When the piece opens, Setterfield is alone, trying out some movement combinations with melancholy Chopin music playing. Her phrases are balletic, and some of them stretch out poignantly as she arches her upper back or turns her head slightly away—but she breaks off each line of inquiry, as if she's not satisfied with it or has a better idea. A phone starts ringing, and for a long time she ignores it, then yells, "Someone get that?" without breaking her line. Suddenly she drops this activity and comes down to the front of the space, where she addresses a long monologue to the audience about how hard social situations are. Her tone is confiding—she's sure we never know what to say at parties either—only she looks just over the audience's heads, not into our faces, and the words sound ever so slightly studied.

Then she's back in the studio again, and when she answers that insistent telephone all the other dancers respond at once. All of them have a problem, and all of them want to come over right away and talk about it, despite Valda's soft protest that she's working and would rather not be interrupted. When they arrive, the occasion has turned into a party, and they all barge around making remarks of greeting and introduction, exchanging trivial information, trying to make graceful exits. Only they aren't pretending to be at a party, they simply move around in high gear, sometimes fastening onto other persons to shake hands or use them as a door or a chair, but often just reciting a limited number of gambits into the general confusion. Later they enact the same scene without the words.

These scenes form the building blocks of the piece: someone, usually Valda, doing serious movement work; someone telling someone else about some difficulty they've had with other people; sequences of movement that carry out the social interactions in a minimally representational way. One other component is a series of door-size frames, some empty, some panelled. The dancers work in teams with these frames—one holds it, tipping or sliding it to make a constantly changing setting within which or through which the other person appears. These frame-tableaux can be literal—one person steps through a door as the other pulls the frame open—or decorative, or surprising—like a series of blackout poses executed in quick precision by a group, with a panel that's painted yellow on one side and wallpapered on the other. Most of the activity is accompanied by electric boogie music on tape, just for atmosphere.

As the segments succeed one another, a story or two glimmers beneath the rushing around. David and Valda engage in another of their many domestic crises—Gordon has alluded to others in past dances. This one may involve an affair he seems to be having with one of the other dancers, Margaret Hoeffel. But later it may be Susan Eschelbach who's the two-timing culprit. After telling a shaggy-dog story about a nameless man who tried to seduce her—she told

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him she'd think it over—she dances a duet with another man, and everybody slings heavy looks at everybody else's partner. David dances with Margaret, then returns to placate Valda while she's trying to rehearse. There seems to be internal strife in the company too, maybe over sex, maybe not, and a big talk-fight breaks out. Everybody accuses everybody else of being stupid, and when the hubbub subsides, they all get on the phone and call Valda again.

Like all of Gordon's pieces, *Framework* fits together without a chink. The sequence may not be linear, or even contiguous, but each part is so forceful on its own that it demands attention, even belief. The movement looks simpler to me now than Gordon's used to be—mostly big shifts of body shape or direction initiated when a straight arm or leg swivels around or shoots out, pulling the rest of the body with it. It's propulsive, graphic, and often functional, but not especially absorbing to watch for itself. The words too are simple, clear—and banal as hell. Eschelbach's seduction story keeps the dancers in suspense for the longest time—"THEN WHAT HAPPENED?" they demand whenever she reaches a lull. But it's the kind of incident—unimportant and filled with cliches—that you forget as soon as you've dumped it on your roommate, like the tale of how many stores you had to visit to find a sweater the right size.

Gordon's stock-in-trade is a fabricated intimacy. His characters treat each other like members of a family. Their conversations are the junk-heaps of experience. If anything important ever happens to them, it must be either too obvious or too incriminating to report. Their lives are so similar that even their love affairs are interchangeable. Yet, these characters, self-evident though they're designed to be, remain opaque, even the most interesting ones. I wonder, for instance, about the "Valda" of *Framework*. She complains without bitterness that other people make too many claims on her time. Should I feel sorry for her? But why does she let them? And what do they find so sympathetic about her anyway? She doesn't seem any more responsive or helpful to their troubles than anyone else. If she really means those longing, expressive dance moves she was trying out at the beginning, why does she play party games? Is "David's" infidelity nothing more than a new twist on a familiar game they all play?

If *Framework* is a story ballet without a ballet, Douglas Dunn's *Pulcinella* is a story ballet without a story. Dunn choreographed the piece originally for the Paris Opera Ballet a couple of years ago, using the full Stravinsky score but, as far as I could tell, eliminating the scatty libretto that formed the plot of the 1920 Massine-Picasso production for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. This is no real loss, because the original tale was a steeplechase of commedia dell'arte disguises, trumperies, and resurrections from phony fatalities that nobody could follow anyhow.

Dunn's *Pulcinella* is designed pretty much like the rest of his

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work—five other pieces were shown in the two alternating programs at the Joyce. Dunn's choreography owes much to Merce Cunningham, with whom he danced for four years (1969-73). Like Cunningham of that period, Dunn's main preoccupation is the infinite number of possibilities for dance invention. He offers us enchainements, encounters, fillings and emptyings of the dancing space in a prodigal display, without detours to consolidate, highlight, or linger over any of these effects. Instead of people maneuvering into advantageous positions and specially visible formations, they seem to make their dance moves on the run or by accident. You can imagine at another performance the same things taking place off-stage. All this makes Dunn's dances, like Cunningham's, hard to distinguish one from another, especially when most of them use the same number of dancers and occupy the same proscenium space, as in the Joyce season.

But for *Pulcinella* he has augmented his regular company of six with another nine dancers, plus special guest artist Karole Armitage. The extra forces give a certain weight and volume to his movement arrangements, add definition and contrast, making them look less random than usual. More people do the same things, if not precisely at the same time. So you can see, for instance, miniature corps de ballet forming and dissolving, people returning to the same partners they had earlier, a two-girl ensemble off in one corner who are supposed to be doing something in unison until one of them sandwiches in extra movements, like a coryphee eager to get noticed.

A lot of the time in *Pulcinella* I had a suspicion that Dunn was spoofing the prissy mannerisms and the notorious egos for which Paris Opera dancers have a reputation. Right at the beginning, as dancers are entering downstage, a man carries in another man all curled up in a bundle, sets him down, and leaves. A long time later, the first man strides back in, taps the bundle on the shoulder, and leaves again. The bundle rolls over once, gets up, and walks off. This kind of pretentious inconsequence could also refer to the French avant-garde of Diaghilev's time. At other moments, perfectly legitimate solos crop up with no fanfare.

Pulcinella keeps reminding me of a ballet that's lost the gist of what it is trying to say. There are shadows of dramatic events. Chase music is heard, the dancers rush together with little quick steps, and start knocking each other about. It's not precisely a battle scene, but the stage is full of contentious action. As the music ends, the combatants clear out, one last man carrying the limp body of another, and another man, whom we hadn't seen fall, is left lying on the ground. As the next dance begins he simply gets up and walks off. In the middle of another general dance number, a woman enters wearing dark pink tights and a purplish jerkin made of some odd, loopy material. Mysterious, remote, she cuts a slow diagonal of balletic postures through the space and leaves—never to return.

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Besides this alien adagio dancer, there are protagonists of a sort. Armitage, in an excruciatingly unbecoming tutu and with her crew-cut hair bleached yellow, begins the ballet with a solo in which her long arms and prehensile legs grope at the air, and she skitters around with the most spectacular awkwardness. Armitage's dance, like the rest of the choreography, is set to the music, but she never quite dances as if this matters. She's always subtly, unmusically, off. To perform this takes either an acute musicality or a lifetime of ignoring music, as Cunningham alumni like Dunn and Armitage were trained to do. Armitage returns later in the ballet, minus the tutu, as a slowwitted but skeptical Colombina to Dunn's Pulcinella. Dunn's character, one of his most memorable pieces of distracted clowning, appears halfway through the ballet in a white outfit with rows of ruffles on one sleeve and down the other leg. (Mimi Gross designed the costumes.) With no hat and his sandy hair flopping over his face, he looks as if he's been taken by surprise and had to come onstage with only half his costume on.

Dunn is an engaging bumbler, his face knotted up in concentration, his body always in the wrong place. He dances in circles all stooped over, as if he isn't sure where the floor is. He sees the other men supporting women and thinks he's supposed to have a partner, but each woman he hauls into a new position ignores him. All alone, he dances an extraordinary solo where some part of his body wants to contradict whatever another part sets out to do. The effect is total disjunction and defeat; he never can complete anything, every intention is cut off and redirected. He notices that the other dancers are advancing one by one in a group toward a downstage corner. He approaches them and tries to figure out what they're doing. By the time he catches on, they've all reached the corner and left without him.

Eventually he teams up with Armitage, but they're a notably incompatible pair, his movements all foreshortened and intense, hers all splayed out and overflowing. For a few measures the ensemble actually achieves a big unison finale effect; then Stravinsky rollicks into some last inventions and by the time the finale music comes round again the dancers' transient unanimity has dispersed and they are drifting away. I seem to remember Dunn left alone, yearning after them in all directions but uncertain which way to follow. The comic distress of the character is clear in my memory, even if the final moves of the dance are not.

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VERNON YOUNG

Parental Guidance Suggested

MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON was obviously made for Pauline Kael—by Ronald Reagan. Paul Mazursky, allegedly the film's director, committed the cardinal act. He told everyone in the cast that he was in a comedy so that he'd be sure to work at being funny: everyone, that is, but his best and only actor, Robin Williams who, uninformed of the drift, was stuck with the first draft of the scenario (my dream). All by himself and with disturbing conviction, Williams was enacting the tragicomedy of a defecting Russian who, in his new-found land, is as harried by the polyglot indifference surrounding him as he had ever been at home by the nagging daily despotism of the KGB. The climax of his alienation comes when he is ripped off by members of that minority he has been assured are his natural comrades: their skins may be dark but their hearts are on the left, just like a Russian's. Someone, front office, was afraid to say this unequivocally. Without telling Williams, they rewrote every alternate sequence, some as farce, others as an Education for Citizenship dialogue, suitable for Public Television. If my reconstruction is wide of the mark, give me a better reason for the catastrophe. Every neo-chauvinist cliche turns up in this movie: black is beautiful and be glad you're a Manhattan American, especially if you're from somewhere else, like Alabama or Puerto Rico or colorful Italy or beleagured Afghanistan. And they signed off with great news for us all: that no matter how outrageous life may get here, it's worse in Soviet Russia. I pass.

Some films are unbelievably bad; others, such as *And The Ship Sails On*, are believably bad, since we know in advance that the director responsible is beyond redemption. If we always hope, we invariably distrust. With filmmakers like Fellini, there is little point in a critic talking as if they had options, that even a moderate degree of self-appraisal would have salvaged their wrecked vessels. Self-appraisal is precisely what has been left out of them, or perhaps removed after the eighth-and-a-half operation. As some people can live without an appendix, Fellini lives without self-correction. His eighteenth film is even more of an extravaganza than his last ten; if not more lavish, more inexplicable. A generous summary would describe it as a sort of fable that takes place on an ocean liner going nowhere save to a funeral, on the eve of World War I. The ship is a mockup, the sea is a mockup and beyond that anything resembling human intercourse or history in the raw is a mockup.

Among the twenty-five named actors not one is a breathing simulation or a lively caricature. The director who, first after De Sica, in

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a major way, turned the course of Italian filmmaking in the 1950s, long ago exhausted his interest in the medium as such and with it his interest in definable human situations. In his interviews, he seldom refers with any warmth to the *people* or to the *characters*, or even to the *actors* in his movies; he calls them *faces*. Yet they are not even faces, they are *masks*. The text for every late Fellini film is "bring on the clowns."

His partial explanation of his latest has a kind of creepy relevance. "As has happened to me for the past fifteen years when I live too closely, too long with a project, I begin to hate it. I try to get rid of it, I don't want to do it any more. That is the moment when the film actually gets made." I'll concede that this probably comes closer to accounting for that colossal effort one feels in every foot Fellini shoots than any more elaborate reason I might have contrived. In the same context (I'm quoting from program notes) he coolly assures everyone that upon completing the film he no longer remembers his original intention: only that he wanted to make a film in the style of the first motion pictures "which therefore would have to be in black and white or, rather, lined with patches of humidity like something out of an old film library. A fake, in fact, and this was what really captivated me because I think real cinema has to be like that."

Why did he *not* make a film in that style? Why, after the first silent sequence, in *his* style, not that of a century ago, did he switch into opera, then back again into the wordy, unlaughable hokum that comprises all the rest? "Real cinema" is a "fake"? Existentially speaking, yes. But the man who made *La Strada* and *Il Bidone* would not have so described it—if for no better reason than that the presence of his earlier scriptwriters, like Ennio Flaiano, would have restrained him. Only Bergman can talk as much nonsense, with an equally irresponsible conviction that since reality is infinitely elastic, so is art; hence, at any moment of misgiving, he can abruptly change the terms in which he has been composing, with no respect for his audience and no harm done to his conscience.

At the close of this sea-borne circus, a contemporary camera crew tracks into the scene. Since throughout the move a cranked camera has been utilized from time to time, are we to infer that Fellini is here restating his allegiance to that lovable fakery he finds indispensable for "real cinema"? In which case, why together with a central and baffling motif about the burial of an opera singer, did he bother to include prominently those Serbian refugees who represented the first consequences of Sarajevo and the end of a world? Scarcely the substance of a joke or of artistic illusion! Again, I'm being trapped into asking rhetorical questions. Federico Fellini, by his own admission, doesn't know *what* the hell he is doing—but he's a wizard at getting producers to finance his gigantic whimsies. I pale when I try thinking of the 192,000 feet of film he shot from which the present 10,000 feet were edited.

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We may plausibly wonder if Ettore Scola attended a sneak preview of Fellini's spectacle before making *Le Bal.* Else, it is a coincidence, and unwelcome, that he should have decided to shoot *his* film—which, with two other scriptwriters, he amplified from an existing play—as a "silent": that is to say *without dialogue.* One fraudulent film modifies another. Fellini's is at least memorable to the eye for its forty settings. Scola's single set is a Parisian dance hall wherein, over a period of thirty-eight years, seven dumb encounters among an assortment of raffish habitués are supposed to convey what Scola believes to have happened in France between 1936 and 1983. A congregation of stereotypes in the first episode remains more or less constant; with these, Scola hoped to suggest that the political roles taken by the featured characters (under the German occupation and during the American aftermath) were determined by the social attitudes they had already displayed. In point of fact, he never embraced this promising insight because, having settled for no speech, he was left with the challenge of conveying his implication through subtleties of gesture and stance completely foreign to the third-rate actors he employed. His *dramatis personae,* to coin a phrase, indicates the generic effect he was aiming for, a kind of our-time Morality: Young Student; Near-Sighted Girl; Young Alcoholic; The Collaborator; Fat Man in Beret; Algerian Refugee; An Aristocrat; A Worker; and the rest. This time you really *can't* tell the sheep from the goats without a program. Seldom, since those lousy "silent classics," has there been such a profusion of leering, simpering, pouting, eyebrow-twitching and necktie-fingering.

Moscow on the Seine might have been the title if Scola had convinced his producers (Algerian) that as a high-ranker in the Italian Communist Party his real subject was "the dignity of the underprivileged." Italy may be the only country remaining in the West where anyone would accept, as an adequate synonym for Communism's ethical correlative, "the dignity of the underprivileged." In any case it's a wildly offside description of anything we see represented in this perniciously unattractive movie. What Scola does further with the changing dance idioms of four decades leads one to believe that he has no more respect for popular music, in any vein, than he has for those who play it or dance to it. *Le Bal* won the Silver Bear at the 1983 Berlin Film Festival and was nominated last year, out there near Sunset Boulevard, for Best Foreign Language Film, probably because no one in it spoke a foreign language.

If Fellini's glance at the silent film was nostalgic and Scola's, I'd judge, opportunistic, Woody Allen's recovery of yesterday's cinema (and yesterday's hype) in *Zelig* is wholly inspired. For the first time Allen has used the film medium as if it were his natural inheritance and used it masterfully to frame an absurd success story *à la mode* and to reconstruct a phase in the development of cinema when it was more often fatuous than fabulous—in the late twenties and early thirties, as Hollywood blundered into sound. His narrative point

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of departure for his wild biography of the Chameleon Man, Zelig, was the I-knew-him-when method of Warren Beatty's film, *Reds*, which he improves upon even as he sends it up. Everything works in this brilliant scenario: the vanities of literary criticism, solemn diagnoses by the medical profession, the more volatile inferences of psychoanalysis and the numerous inserts whereby Allen, as Zelig, appears to be posing in the flesh with the celebrities of fifty years ago.

We are told that to capture accurately the bleached look not just of a faded print but that of the average studio production in the thirties, Allen's photographer availed himself of the period's cameras and their lenses. And no touch is haphazard. Not the least of his convincingly uncomfortable sequences are those in which Dr. Eudora Fletcher (played by Mia Farrow with exactly the accent of self-sufficient dryness) is trying reverse psychoanalysis on Zelig in the hope of shocking him out of his delusion that *he* is the psychiatrist; they are shot with the camera remaining at a fixed distance, no cutting from face to face, no changing witness point. The medium commenting on itself without mercy has rarely been so skillfully set up. Throughout this film, the *reality* established by Allen is not that of 1928 or 1932 but that reality as it was focused arbitrarily in the awkward age of the motion picture.

As for extended implications, I don't want to belabor them. Like *Being There* and *King of Comedy* before it, *Zelig* suggests how successful, given the right moment in our society, a psychotic nonentity can be. To this end, the resolutions, if somewhat surreal, are of the essence. May I assist your recall? The relapsed Zelig is rescued from the soothing conformities of the Third Reich by his psychiatrist, who happens to be an amateur pilot. Pursued by the Luftwaffe, she panics and Zelig, fearful for his life, takes control of the aircraft; whereupon he becomes the first to fly the Atlantic Ocean upside down, is cited as a model of heroism for the youth of the land, marries his psychiatrist and is now prepared, intrepidly, to read *Moby Dick*.

By way of postscript. For me it's unarguable that one of the supremely beautiful things on this earth is a woman's body set to music. In *Backstage at the Kirov* (an Armand Hammer production, 1983), you can watch this phenomenon for an hour and a half as two British filmmakers (Derek Hart and Ivan Strasburg) photograph, as never before in such Degas-like detail, not only preparations at the Kirov School but also, on stage at the theater, the second act of *Swan Lake*, danced by Galina Mezentseva who is, I think, the most intoxicatingly expressive ballerina I have ever seen, together with a corps de ballet which is surely unsurpassed. Perfection of form achieved by subordination of the ego: perhaps classical ballet is the only area in which the ideal of utopian Marxism has been incarnated! But don't repeat this within earshot of Ettore Scola or the producers of *Moscow on the Hudson*.

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DEAN FLOWER

The Generosity of Poor Henry James

UNTIL THE PUBLICATION EARLIER THIS YEAR of the final volume of Henry James's correspondence[1] it has not been possible to appreciate what was perhaps the final and most curious romantic passion of his life. It began in the hills of western Massachusetts in 1905, ran its sometimes impetuous course in the by-ways of Sussex and the mountains of southern France; then it cooled, only to flame up again on a visit to Farmington, Connecticut, in 1911. James called the experience "wondrous," "magical," and "ineffable." It made him wish to be young again, although he knew that "*She*" was "poison." I refer, of course, to the romance of Henry James and the motor car.

"A great transformer of life and of the future!" he wrote to William, having just motored from Lenox to Ashfield and return in the Whartons' spanking new Panhard. "The potent way it deals with a country large enough for it not to *rudoyer*, but to rope in, in big free hauls, a huge netful of impressions at once—this came home to me beautifully, convincing me that if I were rich I shouldn't hesitate to take up with it."[2] Take up with it he did, however. To Edith Wharton six months later James recalled his summer romance. The car became "Pagello" (George Sand's lover) and James's thoughts "hover about him as he so greatly adventures and so powerfully climbs *m'attachant à ses pas*, to his flights and his swoops—and even more to his majestic roll in the deep valleys, with a wistfulness in which every one of those past hours lives again." James recaptured his "Pagello-sense" in the "wondrous French machine" of the Edwin Austin Abbeys, whose "capacious luncheon-stacked car" he found "the very summit of human diversion." A week later James unabashedly urged Edith Wharton, who was now about to tour Europe, to "take me!" if she had "the proper Vehicle of Passion." He called it "a magical monster" and a "Chariot of fire"; it was "the only way to travel," and at 62 he was having "the time of my life." Seeing northern Italy by car was "an ineffable experience," although Italian drivers were "*crapulous*." James enjoyed the costly motor cars of several different friends, but Edith Wharton's he came to associate intimately with her. He quivered to her "silver-sounding toot"; he marveled at her "frame of steel"; she became "the Devastating Angel"

[1] HENRY JAMES LETTERS, edited by *Leon Edel*. Volume I, 1843–1875; Volume II, 1875–1883; Volume III, 1883–1895; Volume IV, 1895–1916. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. $22.50; $20.00; $25.00; and $30.00.

[2] *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Lubbock (New York, 1920), Vol. II. p. 35. Regrettably omitted from Edel's edition.

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and "the Firebird," and the car became simply "*She.*" He called its allure "the poison of the motor" and once begged Mrs. Wharton—he was only half joking—"not to let it (i.e. *Her*!) get me!" But he never forgot the rapture; these were all "wondrous motor days." In 1911 he wrote to Theodate Pope Riddle thanking her for their "fabulous, mythical and well-nigh incredible" trip from Farmington to Cambridge. It was to James all "beauty and irresponsibility and lavish felicity"; in short, "the most masterly of summer's day fairy-tales." He also mentioned how, at the gas pumps, "I winced in silence over the grim renewal of the ebbing fluid."[3]

But James did not consummate his motor romance with a purchase. "I thank my stars," he wrote, "that I'm too poor to have one." Although it cost him a struggle when the "motor-chance" was offered, he usually chose to be "motionless" in his study, "a poor worm of peace and quiet." The letters dramatize as nothing else does in the James canon (except perhaps *The Notebooks*) his frequent desires for material wealth and power, together with his sense of the necessity to chasten and discipline these longings. Nowhere is this pervasive tension more evident than in James's entertaining letters to Jessie Allen, the bountiful lady who kept sending him lavish gifts. How could he endure, he asked, her "unbridled extravagance?"

> It confirms every conviction as to the way you ruin your friends and make them a full-fed and ravening mob! *Of course* we're devouring monsters, when you've reduced it to a science to kindly see that we become so. Well, I thank you most humbly, blushingly and awkwardly—but I feel myself in the very act going straight downhill . . . not somehow to have made you keep it for yourself.

But Lady Bountiful did not get the point. In 1902 she gave him two big bearskins, and James promptly refused them: "I really, dear lady, can *not* again receive *any* object of value from your hands, of value or even of *no* value, and I loudly won't hear of so much as even cursefully growling Thanks at you for those before me." He closed this letter with "I am yours most unforgivingly, resentfully, punitively Henry James." But lavish Miss Allen still wanted him to have the gift, and James found a way to accept it and terminate the *largesse*. "I accept, I retire," he wrote, "BUT all on a condition." And the condition was that he address her as "Goody Two Shoes" for the rest of his life. Which he did. They were of course, and remained, the very best of friends.

Gifts from the well-intentioned wealthy continued to plague James. "It's one's rich friends who cost one!" he observed ruefully to Goody in 1907. His experience seemed an echo of what was

[3] Unpublished letter of June 6, 1911. Used by permission of the Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, CT.

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called, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, "the high brutality of good intentions." When a scheme was launched in America to solicit funds for James on his seventieth birthday, he moved instantly to stop it, cabling to his nephew: "Immense thanks for warning taking instant prohibitive action. Please express to individuals approached my horror money absolutely returned." When the gift was converted to a commission for John Singer Sargent to paint James's portrait, he agreed only on the condition that the painting not belong to him. When Frances Hodgson Burnett sent him a basket of fruit, James inundated the more popular and affluent novelist with fulsome rhetoric: "Your gorgeous, glorious gift shook Lamb House to its foundations an hour or two ago." He pretended to "*fawn* upon you with the force of our gratitude" and cast her as "the Princess of Maythem, for whom these trophies are as mere lumps of sugar or grains of salt."[4] The most wonderful example of the thanks-but-no-thanks letter was written to Walter Berry in 1912. The gift was a leather dressing-case, but James describes it in nebulous images of "polished gold" and "sublimated leather" as "the tawny lion, portentous creature, in my path." It made all of James's other possessions—indeed, it made *him*—feel shabby; it reminded him that he could not reciprocate such favors, and it left him feeling "so awkward and graceless and poor." "Ah, Walter, Walter, why do you do these things? they're magnificent, but they're not—well, discussable or permissable or forgivable."[5] The whole long letter is a study in tact and honesty, as James both entertains and instructs his benefactor in a way far more inherently generous than gift giving.

Something of James's resistance to the gifts of his wealthier friends may be put down to pride (he would *not* be treated as a poor relation), and something of it to his moral sense (motor cars and fancy leather goods were *not* the stuff of happiness). But the letters suggest another ingredient in it: embarrassment. James thought of himself as poor. He spoke to others frequently of his modest or anxious or disheartening financial condition—indeed, it is a main theme of the letters from the early 1870's onward. How was he to keep money coming in from his writing? By the mid-1890s, however, if not a good deal sooner, James was very secure financially: he inherited $20,000 from Alice in 1892, as several letters make plain; he discusses with William the lucrative property in Syracuse, New York, which they jointly own; his letters to editors and publishers show him demanding and getting sizable advances on his novels and goodly sums for individual stories, essays, travel writing, and serialization. And at certain periods of his life James seems to have been able to produce fiction faster than most people could read. Yet James protested that he was poor. In 1891 he wrote these envious remarks about Henry Adams:

[4] *The Selected Letters of Henry James*, ed. Edel (New York, 1955), p. 205. Another regrettable omission from the new edition.

[5] Lubbock, Vol. II, p. 198. Unforgivably omitted by Edel.

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> I like him, but suffer from his monotonous disappointed pessimism. Besides, he is what I should have liked to be—a man of wealth and leisure, able to satisfy all his curiosities, while I am a penniless toiler—so what can I do for him?

James clung to this image of himself as a "penniless toiler" long after it had ceased to apply. He could in 1899 earn the $4,000 initial payment on the purchase of Lamb House within the year, without touching his savings. Yet the letters repeatedly claim he lived in a garret. He wrote to William in 1903, "I have practically never travelled at all—having never been economically able to; I've only gone, for short periods, a few times—so much fewer than I've wanted—to Italy; never anywhere else that I've seen everyone about me here (who is, or was, anyone) perpetually making for." And as if this claim, with all its revealing qualifications, were not extravagant enough, James continues: "Counting out my few dips into Italy, there has been no time at which *any* abroad was financially convenient or possible." These are extraordinary fictions for James of all people, the best-travelled and most persistently "abroad" American writer, to have made. Evidently James needed the private myth that he was poor, and then felt painfully caught when one of his wealthy friends took him too literally. Poor Strether, poor Dencombe, poor sensitive gentleman James!

One of the most interesting stories to unfold in the letters is James's struggle from 1890 to 1895 to turn himself into a playwright. Letter after letter makes clear that he had only one strong motive: he wanted to make a lot of money. But he writes as if hearing the wolf at the door. "The case is simplified for me by the direst necessity," he explained to Robert Louis Stevenson in 1893; "the *book*, as my limitations compel me to produce it, doesn't bring in a penny." James forgot that two years earlier he had already told Stevenson, "simplifying and chastening necessity has laid its brutal hand on me and I have had to try to make somehow or other the money I don't make by literature." Earlier still, in an 1890 letter to William, James guardedly mentioned an "enterprise" conceived "with a religious and deliberate view of gain over a greater scale than the Book (my Books at least) can ever approach bringing in to me."[6] Here again he claims "it's an absolute necessity, imposing itself without choice if I wish a loaf on the shelf for my old age." James adds to this transparent self-persuasion by telling his friends that, as a playwright "I feel at last as if I had found my *real* form" for which "the pale little art of fiction" was a poor substitute. Yet these ambitions are curiously orchestrated in the letters with other dramatic events in James's life. He associates the final illness of his sister Alice with his dying hopes for *The American* as a stage success.

[6] Lubbock, Vol. II, p. 162. Another lamentable omission.

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"Alice seems to be distinctly *soothable* by hypnotism" is followed immediately by "Fifty-third night of *American*." And about the time when Constance Fenimore Woolson fell or jumped to her death all alone in Venice, James was writing to William, "I had a fall—or rather took a jump—the other day (a month ago) of which the direction was not vulgarly—I mean theatrically and financially—upward." Years before James abandoned all hope for lucre in the theatre, his letters foretell the failure. He called it "my sawdust and orange-peel phase" in 1891 and an "intolerable experiment" in 1893. Even the plot of James's do-or-die play, *Guy Domville*, reveals, in the way James summarizes it, virtually a design for the failure of his stage career:

> The idea of it is that Domville throwing up the priesthood to take possession of his place in the world etc. finds, in fact that he comes into the world only to make himself happy at the *expense* of others . . . and in the face of this reality—ugly and cruel—turns back again to his old ideal, renounces his personal worldly chance.

Read "priesthood" as the high calling of James's fictional art, and "the world etc." as the theater where large fortunes might have selfishly been made. The plot, in short, was for James to forsake his whole sordid, possessive financial dream and return to the religion of art.

These four full volumes of correspondence, still only a selection from the more than 12,000 letters extant, put before us a far less austere and forbidding James than the one many readers have come to expect: not a neurasthenic purist, not a magisterial eminence, not a suave worldling—although James could at times be any of these things. His persona as a correspondent evolves strikingly over the years. As a young man in Edel's Volume I, James is self-consciously affected ("Porphyro grew faint," he likes to say of himself), often rigidly idealistic (he makes cousin Minny Temple's death seem like a good thing), and sometimes an utter snob (Prospect House atop Mt. Holyoke, visited in 1864, is "a concentrated vulgarity"). As a successful young novelist in Edel's Volume II, James is a shrewd and witty observer of manners, capable of great sympathetic outbursts to friends like Grace Norton, but more often on the *qui vive* for novelistic material. But the letters of the "middle years," Edel's Volume III, dramatize a great change. James now talks about his own works less and corresponds more. His capacity to speak his own feelings freely and deeply increased along with his ability to imagine and speak to his correspondents. More adept at "the mere twaddle of graciousness" than ever before, James simultaneously came to have less need of masks. Volume IV may well be one of the best collections of letters ever assembled. It allows us to see James's

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complex and expressive humanity in a way far deeper than Edel's own biographical account of the irreproachable Master suggests.

To other writers James was conspicuously generous. To Howells, James spoke over the years with ever increasing respect and affection, both for the works and the man. To Stevenson, James always marveled at the wondrous energy and freshness of the narrative method. To Sarah Orne Jewett, James urged feelingly that she return to her best Dunnet Landing eloquence. To Edith Wharton he encouraged her to "Do New York." Whether it was to famous writers, painters, and performers or to his nieces and nephews in America or to the egg lady in Rye, James unfailingly found ways to speak his correspondent's language and imagine their worlds. I shall risk one example of this virtue, found in a letter to the person who would occupy Lamb House while James visited America in 1904-05. James had never met the woman, but he needed to explain the workings of his household:

> Lastly, I take the liberty of confiding to your charity and humanity that precious little person of my Dachshund Max, who is the best and gentlest and most reasonable and well-mannered as well as most beautiful small animal of his kind to be easily come across—so that I think you will speedily find yourselves loving him for his own sweet sake. The Servants, who are very fond of him and good to him, know what he "has" and when he has it. . . . Of course what he most intensely dreams of is being taken out on walks, and the more you are able to indulge him the more he will adore you and the more all the latent beauty of his nature will come out.

It would take a cold heart indeed to resist such gentle and humane persuasion as that.

Edel tends to view James's letters as rhetorically deceptive, with ironic traps for the unwary. I see James as having better manners—and more moral strength—than that. Remaining tenderly tactful, he can yet say with utter honesty what he thinks. To the young sculptor Hendrik Andersen whom James cherished to a fault, he offered bombshells of criticism voiced so sympathetically that even the harshest of them exploded without personal hurt. "Your production *is* prodigious and heroic and very beautiful and interesting to me," he once wrote to "dearest Hendrik," but James wondered ("affectionately and heartily") "where this colossal multiplication of divinely naked and intimately associated gentlemen and ladies, flaunting their bellies and bottoms and their other private affairs" could ever be displayed in America. Anderson was only one of a series of younger men with whom James affectionately corresponded in his later years: Jocelyn Persse, Hugh Walpole, Morton Fullerton, Howard Sturgis, and Gaillard Lapsley were the notable ones. In his biog-

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raphy Edel makes much of the "homoerotism" (as he persists in calling it still) of these letters, but I wonder if he has not exaggerated it. James's protestations of love are such intensely verbal gestures. "I wish I could go to Rome and put my hands on you (oh, how lovingly I should lay them!)," he writes to Andersen, "but that, alas, is odiously impossible." The written words enact the emotion, and virtually live the experience: "I might take consoling, soothing, infinitely close and tender and affectionately-healing *possession* of you." Clearly it is always by words that James takes possession of anything. Similarly, James will often declare himself at one with his correspondent: "Infinitely, deeply, as deeply as you will have felt, for yourself, was I touched by your second letter," he tells Andersen in a Whitmanian surge of empathy; "I respond to every throb of it, I participate in every pang." Or to Fullerton he writes "You touch and penetrate me to the quick, and I can only stretch out my hand to draw you closer." No wonder James could so feelingly read Whitman aloud with Edith Wharton in the summer of 1905. In his words as nowhere else, he was the man, he suffered, he was there.

It is arguable that James lived more deeply in and through his words than any other American writer. When Alice died in 1892 James described in a long painstaking letter to William her final hours, shaping and in a sense making the event with his words. James retold the fiasco of *Guy Domville* many times in the weeks and even months after the event, living and reliving his anguish. So too did James repeatedly reconstruct the death of Constance Fenimore Woolson, seeking in words to understand and possess what had happened. James never made a penny from his letters, of course, but he sensed how writing them would enrich his life. There is something heroic in all this. One sees it in the sheer number of James's letters, in their length and generosity of spirit, and in the staggering number of his personal friends—with so many of whom he kept faithfully in touch for decades. But it is more than a question of numbers. In his later years when the correspondence often became an almost overwhelming burden, James would spend the evening—after a full day's work—catching up, writing as he preferred by hand. Frequently James would say at the close of a letter that it was long past midnight, or that all his servants were long ago in bed, or simply that "the pen drops from my hand." Even after James's stroke in December, 1915, he continued to dictate letters, and Edel has included this "Deathbed Dictation" at the end of Volume IV. Whatever it might mean, and perhaps it means nothing, the fact that he continued to will these letters into being, as his mind was slipping away and consciousness fading, is more than a little awesome.

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WENDY LESSER

The Character As Victim

> What I understand by an author's love for his characters is a delight in their independent existence as *other people*, an attitude towards them which is analogous to our feelings towards those we love in life; and an intense interest in their personalities combined with a sort of detached solicitude, a respect for their freedom. This might be—indeed should be—a truism, but I suppose it to be one no longer. The writers whom we admire today do not appear to love their characters, and the critics who appraise their books show no sign of doing so either. For a writer or critic to show delight in a character would seem today rather naive, an old-fashioned response left over from the days of Dickens or Surtees. Characters, it seems, are no longer objects of affection.
>
> —John Bayley, *The Characters of Love*

Among modern novelists, the prevailing idea appears to be that authors and their characters are in direct competition. What one side gains (in terms of verisimilitude, power, affection, fame, or whatever), the other loses. Of course, the author generally being in the dealer's seat, he can pretty much stack the deck to assure his own victory—if indeed victory consists of looking smarter, or nicer, or more lovable than one's characters. In the old days it was considered a victory if the author could eliminate himself as much as possible: "you become a nonentity, like Shakespeare," said William Carlos Williams, describing the creation of great characters. But the last thing most modern authors want is to disappear from their novels, because then they might not get full credit. And credit appears to be what most of them are finally after—a critical pat on the had, an outpouring of readerly admiration, a place in the Modern Authors Hall of Fame. You can feel this in the very texture of their prose.

These authors will frequently argue that much as they might *like* to disappear, such conjuring tricks just aren't possible anymore. The whole game of literature has gotten too sophisticated, they will say; readers know they're reading a "text" and can't be fooled into thinking it's real life. But this can be disproved by a few obvious counter-examples: Norman Mailer, for instance, does one of the great disappearing acts of all time in *The Executioner's Song*, a novel which both creates a great character *and* comments on how the "fiction" was composed. Maybe it's just that writers have gotten lazier. It's much easier to trumpet out the difficulty of one's authorial task

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than to make a very difficult thing look easy (as Michael Jackson does when he dances, or Dickens does when he writes). And many modern novelists are simply not good enough—Bayley would say, not loving enough—to spend the world on their characters and have something left over for themselves. So the characters are the ones who consistently get shortchanged by the poverty of their authors' imaginations.

I have been speaking of "these authors" as an undifferentiated mass, but obviously not all modern novelists suffer equally or similarly from such problems. In the recent season alone, for instance, there is quite a range in the degree to which authors triumph over characters. One of the most explicit examples of the victimized character occurs in William Golding's *The Paper Men*.[1] Here the central victim, narrator Wilfred Barclay, happens to be a world-famous British novelist, so Golding gets to have his cake and eat it too: he wins *and* loses, giving himself both the benefits of authorial victory and the pathos (through his stand-in character) of victimization. Wilfred is the prey not only of his author, but of a doggedly earnest young American academic named Rick L. Tucker, who wants to be named Barclay's official biographer. In pursuit of this tenure-yielding goal, Tucker roots through Wilf's garbage, brings about his divorce, seduces his daughter, offers his own young wife as sexual bait to the older writer, pretends to save Wilf's life in an Alpine resort, follows him all over the world, and finally, driven crazy by Wilf's evasion, shoots our first-person hero in the midst of his last sentence: "How the devil did Rick L. Tucker manage to get hold of a gu . . ."

As that ending suggests, this novel frequently mistakes silliness for cleverness. The narrative tone has a kind of Philip Roth quality (Roth at his least talented and most whiny), and the plot is similarly self-absorbed. "Solipsistic" might almost be a better word, since Barclay drinks so much that we can never be sure how much reality we are discerning through his alcoholic haze. He is clearly not intended to be a fully likeable character, but his hairy American opponent (Golding makes a big deal out of Tucker's gorilla-like physique) is so unpleasant that we feel forced into Wilf's corner. If the book has any pleasures, they are the petty ones of easy satire, as in some of the dialogues between Tucker and his girlish wife:

"Was there any sun, hon?"
"Sun, hon?"
"In our room this afternoon, hon."
"Why none, hon, I guess not."

But even this cleverly disdainful ear does not make Wilf a sympa-

[1] THE PAPER MEN, by *William Golding*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $13.95.

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thetic character. Nor are we won over by the cancer death of his ex-wife—a *Terms-of-Endearment* move designed to make the prodigal husband sympathetically pathetic. Wilf and Rick are so obviously "paper men" that it hardly seems incumbent on us to expend real emotions on them; certainly Golding doesn't bother to.

Another novel which seems at first to be built on character mockery is Molly Keane's latest work.[2] Keane is an Irish author with a long though sparse career. She published several novels in the 1930s under the name M. J. Farrell and then wrote nothing until she brought out the much-praised *Good Behaviour* in 1981. *Time After Time*, her new novel, features four elderly siblings—Jasper Swift and his sisters April, May, and Baby June—who live in a run-down old Irish mansion and get on each other's nerves. Each sibling has an obvious and potentially symbolic disability: Jasper is blind in one eye, April is deaf, May has a withered hand, and June is short, dumpy, and illiterate. We seem here to be on the verge of character mockery in the manner of Golding. But whereas Golding's latest novel disintegrates into self-pity, *Time After Time* evolves into something very much like love. The possibility of a sympathy born out of distaste—Jasper's for his sisters, ours for all four characters—is the benediction that Molly Keane gives us through this very good novel. We end it in a state of literary grace, having transcended the boundaries of our personal dislikes and moved (like the characters themselves, or at least some of them) toward greater tolerance and affection. Nor is this moral outcome achieved at the expense of humor. There are, for instance, the darkly hysterical scenes in which the blind cousin Leda—foisting herself off on the Swifts after many years of absence—attempts to converse with the beautiful, selfish, deaf April. They are both so awful that one wishes them on each other—and that is the just reward Keane finally gives them, a life of permanently joined miscommunication.

This is not an action-packed novel. Cousin Leda has a shadowy past of Nazi collaboration, but that is the least successful element of the book. Otherwise, the tragedies and achievements are all of the local, domestic variety: squabbles over who drives the family car, an ever-recurrent anxiety about money, Jasper's complaints about his sisters' smelly dogs, May's snobbish pride in her flower-arranging society, April's greed for beautiful clothes, June's concern for her newborn piglets, and all of their worship for their long-dead "Mummy" and her perfectly preserved room. This is a rather ghoulish cast of characters, but Keane nonetheless manages to make them appealing. In a way, the Swifts' various hobbies and activities—gardening, cooking, repairing broken china, arranging wildflowers, preserving old clothes, taming animals—greatly resemble the work of their author: she starts with broken things, imperfect things, and makes something whole and beautiful out of them.

[2] TIME AFTER TIME, by *Molly Keane*. Knopf. $13.95.

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Three of the best novels published recently are not actually recent publications: they are the Viking/Penguin omnibus reissue of Isabel Colegate's first three works, *The Blackmailer*, *A Man of Power*, and *The Great Occasion*.[3] Colegate is best known for her 1980 novel *The Shooting Party*, which won the W. H. Smith Award in England, but she is the author of eight other books, including these three from the late 1950s and 1960s. *The Blackmailer*, which first appeared in 1958, is a Pinter-like tale about a young publisher named Judith Lane, widow of war hero Anthony Lane and mistress of a household managed by a midget named Jean-Claude. Judith, approached by an ex-soldier who threatens to expose the true story of her husband's wartime cowardice, feels obliged to pay him off; unnervingly, she also finds herself attracted to him. The blackmailer in turn falls in love with Judith but nevertheless persists in the blackmail effort, even as he is trying to persuade her to go out with him. In the end he proposes and she almost capitulates.

A Man of Power is a similarly strange book, a modern version of Henry James's *The Awkward Age*. It features Vanessa, the naive young female narrator; Essex Cowper, her beautiful, deceitful, often-divorced mother; and Lewis Ogden, a wealthy businessman who almost marries Essex but in the end falls for Vanessa instead. The portrait of Ogden is especially persuasive, managing as it does to suggest both the special sex appeal and the particular kinds of intelligence to be found in a great man of business. This story of sin and /deception, corrupt social morality and private renunciation, seems amazingly old-fashioned for its 1960 publication date, but it succeeds anyway—perhaps, in part, because we are starved for modern novels offering moral dilemmas.

The third novel, *The Great Occasion*, is a family chronicle about the growing-up of five daughters: their various relations with their difficult father, their love affairs or marriages, their careers or lack thereof, their rising and falling positions in society, their handling of a death in the family, and their final relationship to one another. As in the other two novels, the characters of *The Great Occasion* are distinct, persuasive, and extremely moving; and the plot is worthy of them, consisting of solid events in which they function powerfully, as opposed to the character-mangling machinations or the utter aimlessness of much recent fiction. All three novels end rather abruptly, but that too is part of their odd form of realism: they do not close down their characters, but simply offer them a temporary home. And if these three novels seem old-fashioned in some ways, they are quite modern in others—in the very good descriptions of sexual encounters, for instance. You can see Colegate's characters falling in love through the words they speak, as in this scene between one of the sisters and an artist she admires in *The Great Occasion*:

[3] THREE NOVELS, by *Isabel Colegate*. Penguin Books. $8.95.

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"But perhaps you are someone else's girl?"

"No of course not," she said.

"Then shall we go?" he said, gesturing towards the door.

"Oh," she said. "Well, I was supposed to have dinner with my sister."

"I see." He was evidently sorry, but did not think of overriding her decision.

"Perhaps I could ask her if she would mind if I had dinner with you instead," said Charlotte.

"That would be nice," he said. "I'll wait here while you ask her."

He waited by the door, scrutinizing the passing people with the same amiable stare as before, a large man, but broad rather than tall, going a little bald, his face brown and lined around the eyes. He looked as if he could comfortably wait there a week.

But quotation alone belies the force of Colegate's novels, whose power resides in accumulation rather than in specific lines. I can only say that if you like E. M. Forster and Henry James—if you have run out of novels of that sort—you will be delighted to discover Isabel Colegate.

In the charming and intelligent preface she has written for this reissue, Colegate remarks that after she wrote these early novels "I began to think for the first time about why anyone writes fiction, and indeed what a work of fiction is . . . Anyway these three seem to me now to be the ones I wrote instinctively and without difficulty; this makes me remember them with indulgence and feel pleased to see them in print again." The tone is too self-deprecating, I think; these novels are not mere outpourings, but the skilled work of a talented young writer who definitely had something to say. The preface stresses how important it is to give such writers a chance while they still have this ease of style:

> It is said to be harder to find a publisher for a first novel now than it was then. One might expect this to be the case—publishers' costs are higher and no one likes throwing away their money—but a good many publishers are not too sure about the difference between a good book and a bad book, and not many more can tell the difference between a book which will sell and one which won't.

This kind of publisher's—or rather editor's—dilemma forms the background to Anne Bernays' latest novel, *The Address Book*.[4] The main character, Alicia Baer, is an editor in a Boston publishing house. Now in her early forties, she faces a choice about moving to New York that will affect both her career and her family life. In the

[4] THE ADDRESS BOOK, by *Anne Bernays*. Little, Brown. $14.95.

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end she chooses not to go—and when we get to that point, having credited the dilemma as a real one all the way through, we realize that there was never really any choice. There was no way this settled Boston existence was going to pick up and become an unsettled New York one. Hence all the factors that supposedly went into Alicia's decision—the murder of her best friend and best writer, Davida, along with Alicia's bizarre encounters with five (imaginary?) characters who have invaded her address book—turn out to be mere window-dressing. Or rather, the purported "choice" turns out to be window-dressing on a plot that is really about the creation of characters. All along we've been investing in the wrong aspect of the book, thinking it's about making decisions when really it's about writing.

Bernays' metaphor for this literary process is Alicia's psychic powers. The heroine shadowily foresees—and graphically pictures after the fact—Davida's violent murder; she senses events that are taking place elsewhere in the building at work; and she feels heat generating from her address book after the new names have mysteriously appeared in it. These heretofore unknown "old acquaintances," each of whom reveals a different aspect of Alicia's past and personality, form the most interesting part of the novel, if the most obviously contrived. Yet their advice does not really seem to bear on whether Alicia should go to New York or stay in Boston, but rather on whether she should resume her own lost plan to become a writer. By the end of *The Address Book* we are pretty sure that Alicia Baer will take up fiction—not only because her imaginary friends tell her to, but also because we know from the jacket copy that the *other* AB, Anne Bernays, used to work at Houghton Mifflin. This is a decently written book, and Alicia is not a bad character. But the novel suffers, I think, from the fact that its most compelling element—its "haunting" description of psychic phenomena—is the least credible.

Supernaturalism is also a topic in Robert Towers' *The Summoning*,[5] but here it represents the weakest aspect of the book. In fact, Towers' novel about a former civil rights activist (now a New York foundation executive) who revisits the scenes of his political past is riven by a basic dichotomy: The political side of the novel and its supernatural side simply do not mesh. Those of us who are interested in the civil rights material will find the supernatural element foolish and distracting, whereas I imagine that the spiritualists in the audience will resent the time wasted on political history.

Lawrence Hux, the novel's central character, is apparently suffering a nervous breakdown following the collapse of his marriage. The key signs of this breakdown are: 1) his failure to furnish his bachelor apartment; 2) a tendency to fulfill his sexual needs

[5] THE SUMMONING, by *Robert Towers*. Harper & Row. $15.95.

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through prostitutes rather than colleagues; and, 3) several disturbing and extremely realistic visits from the speechless ghost of his dead best friend, Clark. Clark was shot in the head by a never-indicted white Southern racist during his civil rights work ten years earlier; Hux, who was active in the same campaign, takes this "summoning" as a sign that he must visit the scene of the crime. In the course of his trip (paid for by his foundation as part of a trumped-up education project in Mississippi), Hux meets his friend's murderer, gets involved with Clark's ex-mistress, falls under the sway of a fundamentalist preacher, goes slightly bonkers, and intermittently does a bit of work for the foundation. In the end he can't be sure whether the visitation came from a devilish ghost or an angelic one, but he *has* acquired some kind of lesson about brotherly love and Christ-like forgiveness.

The plot is extremely ambitious and Hux is a strong main character, but the novel as a whole is deeply flawed by weird gaps in knowledge or perception. For instance, anyone who is interested in the ostensible subject of this book (the civil rights cause of the 1960s and its aftermath in the South) will find the novel's portraits of blacks extremely offensive: they are all either sleazily criminal, coldly arrogant, or dumbly unresponsive. Admittedly some white civil rights workers may have been disappointed by the lack of warmth in their subsequent dealings with black Southerners—but need this disappointment be objectified and confirmed by the novel's harsh vision of blacks? Similarly, the author doesn't seem to have decided what *he* thinks of Hux's religious conversion. If we agree with Anne (Hux's Southern girlfriend) in feeling that it is merely an aspect of his mental instability, then large portions of the narrative become senseless or irritating; but if we believe that Hux *has* obtained important insight from an ignorant racist preacher, then what are we to do with our convictions about civil rights and history and politics? Finally, the novel—or novelist—seems unable to gauge our intelligence level accurately. When Hux finally discovers that Anne and Clark had been lovers, we have suspected this for at least the last hundred pages, so the revelation loses its impact. While this may seem a small detail, it is indicative of the book's problems as a whole: we are expected to suspend disbelief in unreasonable ways, to know nothing but what our author tells us. Yet the book's strengths lie in precisely the opposite direction—in its recreation of an atmosphere that depends on our historical knowledge to bring it to life. *The Summoning* is caught between two genres, the novel of male midlife crisis and the novel of historical reflection. I would much have preferred that Robert Towers write the second novel, but in any case I would rather he had chosen one. As things are, Hux's personal crises cheapen and distort the political events of which he is the surviving symbol, so that once-meaningful acts of humanitarian concern get reduced to the level of ghost-ridden compulsions.

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Joan Didion's *Democracy*,[6] set during the closing years of the Vietnam War, is another recent novel built around politics. Actually, politics bears about the same relationship to Didion's novel as money does to the novels of Henry James: it is a central factor, but since the author doesn't have much detailed knowledge about its production and use, it necessarily remains a rather shadowy presence. The politics in *Democracy* are celebrity politics—the kind you can pick up by reading (or working for) *Life* magazine, by watching the late-night news, and by going to high-powered cocktail parties that are not in Washington, D.C. (The politics in Henry Adams' *Democracy*, on the other hand, are the kind you might learn about at high-powered cocktail parties *within* Washington, D.C.—an altogether different matter.) Similarly, the political figures in Didion's novel are high-visibility news-producing types: a Kennedy-like liberal named Harry Victor, a Jackie-sort of wife named Inez, two variously bratty kids, an entourage that includes mainly a P.R. man named Billy Dillon, and a host of politically embarrassing in-laws. The only character who does not fit this mold is a behind-the-scenes war profiteer and possible CIA accomplice named Jack Lovett—but he abandons his civilian status and becomes a media celebrity as well by taking up with Inez Victor.

A no-doubt admirable impulse has recently caused Joan Didion to make politics her subject, but it is not a topic well suited to her talents. She is excellent at observing small give-away details about people and places, at chronicling the bizarre aspects of seemingly mundane existence (freeways, domestic murders, headaches), and at constructing beautifully honed, rhythmically perfect, haunting sentences. None of this fits her to draw the kind of sweeping explanatory pictures that writers like Conrad and Greene have produced—even though they, too, work largely through the accumulation of small detail. But behind a novel like *Nostromo* or *The Comedians*, *The Secret Agent* or *The Quiet American*, is a larger sense of how politics functions objectively, independent of the individual characters chosen to enact and perceive the events. It is this objectivity that Didion lacks—so we get migraines in El Salvador, bruised sensibilities in Jakarta, runaway teenagers in Saigon. Didion is still attracted by the eccentric element, but in the bizarre settings of political reality the eccentric is necessarily the domestic, the mundane.

That is the bad side of *Democracy*. The good side is that the sentences are, as always, beautifully constructed; that several of the characters are well drawn and quite humorous (I especially liked Billy Dillon and Jack Lovett, both of whom function as pomposity-puncturers); that the narrator's relationship with the reader is, as in Didion's best essays, extremely subtle and effective; and, finally, that Didion herself is a character in this novel (a technique she admitted-

[6] DEMOCRACY, by *Joan Didion*. Simon and Schuster. $13.95.

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ly borrows from the Adams of *The Education of Henry Adams* and the Mailer of *Armies of the Night*). Since Didion's novelistic females are usually a pretty soggy bunch—and Inez Victor is no exception—her own clear-eyed journalistic presence is a welcome antidote. Moreover, Didion has a good, objective reason for using herself in this way: she has already become a character in other people's works, in essays, reviews, and textbooks of writing. I found myself particularly moved by the passage in which Didion suggests why she has chosen to narrate *Democracy* in this evasive, self-conscious fashion:

> I began thinking about Inez Victor and Jack Lovett at a point in my life when I lacked certainty, lacked even that minimum level of ego which all writers recognize as essential to the writing of novels, lacked conviction, lacked patience with the past and interest in memory; lacked faith even in my own technique. A poignant (to me) assignment I came across recently in a textbook for students of composition: *"Didion begins with a rather ironic reference to her immediate reason to write this piece. Try using this ploy as the opening of an essay; you may want to copy the ironic-but-earnest tone of Didion, or you might try making your essay witty. Consider the broader question of the effect of setting: how does Didion use the scene as a rhetorical base? She returns again and again to different details of the scene: where and how and to what effect? Consider, too, Didion's own involvement in the setting: an atmosphere results. How?"*
>
> Water under the bridge.

Like Golding's *The Paper Men*, this technique smacks of authorial self-pity; but unlike Golding's, Didion's writing persona is a known and companionable presence, so we really have someone to feel pity *for*. I do not think *Democracy* should quite count as a novel, but, given its refusal to be one while still taking full novelistic credit, it's a much less irritating book than one would expect.

The jacket copy of Renata Adler's *Pitch Dark*[7] describes her as "Joan Didion, with a tendency to giggle," so it is intriguing to have the chance to compare the two writers directly. And indeed *Democracy* and *Pitch Dark* do have many elements in common: a small tale of adultery and betrayal set against world-wide scenery; a bad case of authorial constipation, marked by self-conscious pleadings about how hard it is to tell the story; an abundance of portentous repetitions and ridiculously abbreviated paragraphs; and a tendency for the narrative to circle back on itself, worrying the ever-more-shredded subject like a dog worrying a rag doll. But whereas Joan Didion's narrator is a convincing and appealing version of Joan Didion, Adler's narrator—who is also the central, indeed virtually the *only* character—is an ill-disguised Renata Adler, puzzlingly called

[7] PITCH DARK, by *Renata Adler*. Knopf. $12.95.

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Kate Ennis. (I won't go into all the evidence for the Ennis/Adler equation, which other critics have adequately demonstrated; suffice to say that no Ennis of my acquaintance was ever brought up in a Jewish household, as this one claims to have been.)

I have still not figured out the function of the disguise. Is it supposed to justify the book's definition as fiction? Is it meant to display authorial distance on the subject? Or is it intended to be an act of discretion, like the obviously fake "Jake" label pinned on the heroine's married lover? But *Pitch Dark* is nothing if not indiscreet. Surely anyone acquainted (as I am not) with Renata Adler and/or Jake's original—including, of course, Jake and his real-life wife—will read this novel as the public announcement of a supposedly secret affair, the final, cruel love-letter from a cast-off mistress to her faithless lover.

As for that tendency to giggle, I would say that Didion has it all over Adler in terms of humor. *Pitch Dark*, a fevered tale of thwarted love, harping neurotically on the narrator's own sense of rejection, has all the self-irony of Scott Spencer's *Endless Love*—which means that if the irony is there at all, it's buried so deep the narrator herself doesn't perceive it. The heroine of this story is an incredibly paranoid, obsessive egomaniac, unable to concentrate on anything but her own condition. Other people flit in and out of the narrative, but mostly as props at dinner parties or on airplane rides, and they are inevitably made to appear stupid or dull compared to the oh-so-clever narrator. Some critics have complained that Jake himself is a rather unworthy love object, to which I would respond that: 1) nobody is too low to be worthy of this heroine, who must have been a pain-in-the-ass to deal with in a love affair; and, 2) in any case Jake doesn't have enough substance as a character to be judged *anything*. This narrator does not know how to convey a single soul but herself. When we want to hear what other people are like, she is busy focusing on the little brown speck in her ice-cube.

Pitch Dark's irritating narrator has one redeeming feature: she can produce polished sentences. The writing is good enough for me to understand why it has been praised as "brilliant." But even then I can only see the hardness in the brilliance, the self-congratulation and scorn for others contained in the gem-like vignettes:

> I turn in the driveway, which is narrow. The man stands in the doorway, making the sounds, and even the physical gestures, which men of all classes, the world over, seem to make to a woman, who is simply putting her car into reverse to turn or park it, when they say, as if this were a piece of arcane wisdom, never before heard by woman, Cut it, cut it hard. I say thank you. Then, not unlike Kathleen, yes unlike her, but because the car has now entirely lost its second gear, I roar off.

As always, this author is in the driver's seat—alone, "unlike" all oth-

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ers—while outside stands an undifferentiated mass of characters, a man exactly like "men of all classes, the world over." Kate Ennis may be the victim of an unhappy love affair, but she is the only character in *Pitch Dark* who is *not* a victim of Renata Adler's novelistic technique.

The sexually rejected female intellectual is not necessarily a bad topic for a novel. British novelist Anita Brookner uses it quite well in her new novel *Providence*[8] (as she also did in her first novel *A Start in Life*, also published under the title *The Debut*). Kitty Maule, the heroine of *Providence*, is an attractive, extremely well-dressed university lecturer in French literature. Kitty is only half English, the other half being French—and, like Henry James's Hyacinth Robinson, she is always trying to puzzle out which half is which. She is hopelessly in love with a handsome wimp named Maurice, who ends up marrying Kitty's least accomplished student, one Miss Fairchild. In the course of the novel Kitty cooks lavish meals for Maurice, dresses beautifully for their infrequent dates, consults a fortune-teller about him, arranges to meet him briefly in Paris, and in general fails to notice the approach of the ironic ending which we find so obviously foreshadowed. This purposeful discrepancy between character awareness and reader awareness, which gives the book its charming ironic touch, is also what makes *Providence* a little too dry—a little too unwilling to give the character some free rein instead of dooming her to her predetermined fate. Occasionally the irony becomes too heavy to be credible, the authorial wink a bit too broad, as when this obviously accomplished woman thinks of her lover:

> She felt humbled by the comparison between them, as always; he was finer, larger, better than she was, his insights nobler, his whole fabric superior. With his background, I suppose, she thought vaguely, imagining spacious lawns and grey stone and summer afternoons and his impeccable mother receiving guests.

As the sentences themselves suggest, Anita Brookner's novels have a great deal in common with Barbara Pym's: they tend to be about single women whose love affairs don't conclude satisfactorily (though Brookner's affairs are far sexier than Pym's); they focus closely on the daily details of cooking, sewing, and general household tasks; they contain such fixtures of English country life as jumble sales, garden parties, and vicars (though Pym is much heavier on the vicars than Brookner); and they emphasize the value of wit, giving great credit to characters for small amusing observations. The humorous eye which Pym often turns upon the church,

[8] PROVIDENCE, by *Anita Brookner*. Pantheon. $13.95.

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Brookner reserves for academia, as in the following description of a faculty meeting:

> In front of every seat was a pencil and a pad of paper. With one accord, as Professor Redmile welcomed them at the start of a new term and looked forward to soon being able to give them some definite news about the New Building, all picked up their pencils and started drawing, a defensive move intended to drown out the hearty delight in Professor Redmile's voice but one which gave them the appearance of a rather retarded occupational therapy class.

The pleasures of *Providence* are obvious, and its flaws—such as the too-symbolic discussion in Kitty's class of the French novel *Adolphe*, or Brookner's rather overdeveloped tendency to view her characters ironically—are minor in comparison.

The real test of an author's love for a character comes with that character's death. The most crucial plot turn in a novel, the only complete form of closure in this baggy, amorphous genre, death offers an author the chance to demonstrate "intense interest . . . combined with a sort of detached solicitude," to create emotion while avoiding sentimentality, to bring a character fully to life at the moment he ceases to live. If the fact that characters are not "really" alive is what distinguishes them from readers, the fact that they can die enables them to share their readers' mortality. In the hands of a good and loving author, a character's death will compel from a reader both instinctive resistance and unwilling identification.

This is the effect of Richard Everton's death in *Stones for Ibarra*,[9] Harriet Doerr's first novel. Perhaps the author's age—she was seventy-three when the book came out—has something to do with the novel's delicate treatment of mortality; perhaps not. The restrained prose style that characterizes *Stones for Ibarra* is ageless and impersonal: this writer writes so carefully that she disappears.

At the beginning of the novel we learn that Richard and Sara Everton, a forty-ish California couple, have left their home and friends and normal life to re-open an abandoned copper mine in Ibarra, an isolated Mexican village once inhabited by Richard's grandfather. We also learn, within the first 10 pages of the first chapter, that Richard will die of leukemia within a few years:

> "It's on the outside edge of nowhere," said the friends. "You can't mean to spend the rest of your lives down there."
>
> But it is indeed the Evertons' intention to spend the rest of their lives down there. They will not know until July that in Richard's case this will amount to six years.

[9] STONES FOR IBARRA, by *Harriet Doerr*. Viking. $14.95.

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One might expect that the enormous authorial omniscience of such a statement would diminish the characters' reality. But it has the opposite effect. Leukemia is a fatal disease that one lives with for a time: like Sara and Richard, then, we are put in the position of living with the fact, of starting our adventure (the novel, the life in Mexico) with advance knowledge of how it will end. But, like the characters themselves, we know nothing of how the daily life will unfold in the duration—and that is the stuff of this novel. *Stones for Ibarra* is about a Mexican village and the life taking place within it as much as it is about the American couple who settle there. Chapters about Sara's efforts to learn Spanish or Richard's work at the mine alternate with objectively told chapters about two brothers who ruin each other's lives, a doctor who commits suicide, a church picnic, the family of a jailed murderer. The daily life of Ibarra is a violent one, but the town's inhabitants, like the novel's author, have learned to treat death with a degree of fatalism. It is this attitude, rather than any explicit connection, that links the Evertons' story to the intermingled stories of Ibarra. Thus the aspects of Mexico which generally seem most frightening to Americans—its violence, its fatalism, its preoccupation with death—turn out to be precisely the things that make the place consoling for Sara. And they are what allow Richard's death, however much we expect it, to retain the quality of an "accident." The stones of the novel's title are those which the people of Ibarra traditionally bring to a spot where a fatal accident has occurred: " 'When people pass and remember, they bring stones.' " At the novel's end, they bring stones to the Evertons' house. And *Stones for Ibarra* is itself Harriet Doerr's commemoration of the town. It is a novel that manages to combine both a firm sense of destiny and a humble respect for accident; in the gap between the two lies the freedom she gives her characters.

An instructive contrast to this first novel by an unknown writer can be found in the recent work of a major novelist: Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.[10] This is a bad novel, I think, but it is a bad novel on a high level—extremely intelligent, quite witty, and very certain about its meanings. In fact, Kundera's novel is bad partly because its author knows too clearly and powerfully what he wants to say. Nobody else—in particular, none of the characters—has a chance to say otherwise. The prose has a coy way of suggesting that the novel is partly the product of accident, as when Kundera remarks about an earlier section: "There is something I failed to mention at the time." But this author defers to no power beyond himself, and the novel's "accidental" deaths—of one character in a political demonstration, or of two others under a truck—all feel excessively contrived. You get the sense that it is

[10] THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING, by *Milan Kundera*. Harper & Row. $15.95.

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easy, too easy, for Kundera to kill off his characters because they were never very much alive in the first place.

Kundera is well guarded against such criticism, in that he builds the answers to it into his novel. This is self-aware fiction of the latest variety, parrying with its right just where the critic is about to throw a left. Thus he counters the comments I've just made by saying in the midst of the novel: "But isn't it true that an author can write only about himself? . . . The characters in my novels are my own unrealized possibilities. That is why I am equally fond of them all and equally horrified by them." Certainly this is egotism of a high order (can one only be fond of one's own faults?).

But it is also a lie: Kundera does not love all his characters equally, at least to the extent of giving them independent being. The only character in the novel who seems at all substantial is Tomas, a Czech doctor-turned-window-washer. The central fact about Tomas is that he is a tremendous womanizer (in a manner that is much more evocative of writers than doctors), and this promiscuity is clearly an object of intense enjoyment and delight for the author. Any gestures toward condemning Tomas that occur in the course of the novel are purely ritual ones. Kundera tells us that Tomas's wife, Tereza, is made desperately jealous by his behavior, and we are shown her jealousy and her pain in all its detail. But we can't really feel it. Even when we hear about Tereza's dreams or childhood anxieties, the stories have the ring of something told *to* the author, not something experienced *by* him. And this failure of empathy occasionally causes Kundera to misjudge the reader's reaction. Thus, following a tale of Tomas's infidelities and Tereza's discovery of them, Kundera says:

> Anyone who has failed to benefit from the Devil's gift of compassion (co-feeling) will condemn Tereza coldly for her deed, because privacy is sacred and drawers containing intimate correspondence are not to be opened. But because compassion was Tomas's fate (or curse), he felt that he himself had knelt before the open desk drawer, unable to tear his eyes from Sabina's letter.

Who is kidding whom here? While we're in the process of coldly condemning, perhaps we might cast a brief glance at Tomas's own behavior—but no. Tomas's infidelities, like the desk drawers, are apparently sacred.

An important character in this novel is a female dog named Karenin. As Russian scholars and readers of Tolstoy will know, Karenin is a man's name. But for various reasons Tomas and Tereza do not want to name their dog Karenina, and she therefore becomes Karenin, after which point in the novel she is invariably referred to as "he." Somehow this is indicative of Kundera's attitude toward his human characters, but in reverse: his female characters are really

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just outpourings of a masculine imagination, the results of his determination to give them female names. What they are in themselves does not interest him (though he would have us believe that it does—for this novelist wants full credit for empathy, for "compassion").

The novel ends with, and gains its emotional clout from, the death of the dog Karenin—this from the writer who has just finished attacking "totalitarian kitsch," the production of fake and sappy sentiments. Of course, the long discussion of kitsch may well be Kundera's vanguard action to defend his own kitschiness, another case of the "you can't fault me because I've already faulted myself" approach. But one has the feeling that Kundera's kitsch is the one thing he can't control. Even the use of words like "unbearable"—not only in the title, but throughout the novel—is the sign of a kitschy imagination, one that must resort to excess because it no longer responds to understatement.

There is a great deal of discussion about love in this book: love of a betraying husband for his betrayed wife, of a lover for his mistress, of an author for his character, of a master for his dog. Finally, the novel seems to assert that the latter is the only form of "unselfish" love, because a dog can't give us anything back. But as anyone who owns an animal knows, the love you bear your pets is likely to be the most selfish love of all, for an animal depends on you utterly and never violates your definition of its personality. Because an animal can't talk, you give it language and thought; because it only gives you back yourself, it makes you feel both powerful and unselfish, both loving and beloved. The mistake Kundera makes is to treat his characters like pets. He thinks what he feels for them is love, whereas it's merely an excess of self. If it were really love, we would be able to push aside that gigantic authorial face that looms out of the pages of Kundera's novel (and so much other recent fiction), and find behind it the tiny, human, flawed faces of real novelistic characters. But they aren't there. Behind that leering, all-obliterating mask is nothing.

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ERIC A. HAVELOCK

Fitzgerald's American *Aeneid*

CONSIDERED AS A TRANSLATION OF A LATIN ORIGINAL, this English poem—for that is what it is—can properly become the object of critique. But the first thing to say about it is also the most important thing to say. Robert Fitzgerald's version of the *Aeneid*[1] outranks any other that has come to my attention and it does so easily. Possibly no other work in any language offers such formidable obstacles to the translator as does Virgil's masterpiece, and yet no other needs a translator so urgently, something to which those who have taught it—I am one of them—can readily testify. Few students, or for that matter scholars, ever contemplate a continuous reading from beginning to end, as they might read the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, longer though these are than their Latin counterpart. The provision of an English *Aeneid* pleasurable to read and reasonably faithful which could furnish an overview of all twelve books has always been a familiar and formidable problem. In Homer's case, whatever his distance from us imposed by antique idiom and experience, there is always the story line to carry the reader along. The *Aeneid* is not so much a story—not even an "epic" in the narrowest sense of that term—as a convoluted meditation upon the affairs of men and nations for which the story provides an excuse.

Fitzgerald has come to his task as a Homerist. When his *Odyssey* appeared, it was at once recognized as a tour de force, a Greek story translated into a form of English verse both nervous and vivid; his *Iliad* perhaps less so, but still maintaining a steadfast epic pace. So now arrives his *Aeneid,* to round out a task of interpretation, the terms of which were set by classical antiquity when it bequeathed to us an epic tradition in the grand style expressed in two different languages. His achievement is comprehensive and remarkable.

This is an English (or American) poem, not an exercise in translator's English. To cite a very few examples—and random ones at that—by way of illustrating the controlled energy of the verse:

(i) By Neptune's magisterial authority, a storm at sea has been quelled. Virgil's Latin seizes the opportunity for a simile—one of scores of similar set pieces—drawn from Roman politics:

> When rioting breaks out in a great city
> And the rampaging rabble goes so far
> That stones fly, and incendiary brands—
> For anger can supply that kind of weapon—

[1] THE AENEID, trans. by *Robert Fitzgerald*. Random House. $20.00; $3.95.

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If it so happens they look around and see
Some dedicated public man, a veteran
Whose record gives him weight, they quiet down
Willing to stop and listen.
Then he prevails in speech over their fury
By his authority, and placates them,
Just so, the whole uproar of the great sea
Fell silent.

For modern taste, such a passage offers challenge. Translated, it can turn into a piece of ponderosity, and become an unwanted interruption to the narrative. Both pitfalls have been avoided. In English as in Latin the simile is riveted to its context.

(ii) Dido faced with desertion, after listening to her lover's excuses (Hermes after all has made a special journey from Olympus to warn him to leave Carthage), launches into passionate invective:

Now the gods' interpreter, if you please,
Sent down by Jove himself, brings through the air
His formidable commands! What fit employment
For heaven's high powers! What anxieties
To plague serene immortals! I shall not
Detain you or dispute your story. Go,
Go after Italy on the sailing winds,
Look for your kingdom, cross the deepsea swells!
If divine justice counts for anything,
I hope and pray that on some grinding reef
Midway at sea you'll drink your punishment
And call and call on Dido's name!

Rhetoric fitted to one tongue is always a tricky thing to transfer effectively to another. The eighteenth century could do it—one thinks of Johnson's imitations of Juvenal—but that was after all a rhetorical age, which ours is not—yet it is managed here with a modern directness which follows the shifts in tonality, from controlled sarcasm to cold contempt to baffled rage.

(iii) The weary Trojans have made it at last to their new home in Latium, their "port after stormie seas," and have managed to negotiate a treaty of peace and alliance with the Latin king. But Juno, their implacable enemy, will have none of it; she sends a demon of disaffection to alienate the native population from their ruler and his policy. The chosen target is the women, led in rebellion by the King's consort, Queen Amata. The demon plucks a serpent from its head and flings it into the queen's bosom:

And the serpent
Slipping between her gown and her smooth breasts

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Went writhing on, though imperceptible
To the fevered woman's touch or sight, and breathed
Viper's breath into her. The sinuous mass
Became her collar of twisted gold, became
The riband of her head-dress. In her hair
If twisted itself, and slid around her body
While the infection first, like dew of poison
Fallen on her, pervaded all her senses,
Netting her bones in fire . . .

The knotted case-relations—genitives, datives, ablatives—as they exist in the untranslatable original have as it were been untied just enough for English idiom to register the effect of a rapid infection, anatomically diffused, strangling the breath, constricting the head, and swiftly distorting every sense and fiber of the body. It is all there in Fitzgerald's version.

(iv) Scenes of physical combat, the blows, the dismemberments, the killings, grow tedious even in Homer; I can recall Ivor Richards, one of Homer's translators, commenting upon the poet's apparent obsession with wounds. Corresponding scenes dutifully executed in the *Aeneid* have an air of automatism, as though the poet's heart was not fully committed to his task. They certainly offer a unique challenge to the translator. The last of the combat scenes comes in the confrontation long postponed but now to be consummated between Aeneas the Trojan and Turnus the Italian. The crisis is personal but also historical; it is not simply the fates of two men that are in the scale pan. A feat of physical prowess is required—to be sure Homeric in pattern—the dimensions of which will mark the historical effect, the future Roman supremacy, itself to be long delayed. Virgil's Latin rises to the occasion, and so does the English of his translator:

Never a stone that soared
From a wall-battering catapult went humming
Loud as this, nor with so great a crack
Burst ever a bolt of lightning. It flew on
Like a black whirlwind bringing devastation,
Pierced with a crash the rim of sevenfold shield,
Cleared the cuirass' edge, and passed clean through
The middle of Turnus' thigh. Force of the blow
Brought the huge man to earth, his knees buckling
And a groan swept the Rutulians . . .

The first two of these four selections are drawn from the first and fourth books of the epic, the ones most often sampled in classroom exercise or read in translation; the last two, from books seven and twelve, occur in the second half of the poem which is seldom

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read at all. It is a commonplace of criticism that once Virgil has brought his hero safely home (in the Roman sense of that term) to an encampment on the banks of the Tiber (Book Seven), the narrative begins to flag. It is also due to say of Fitzgerald's translation that its quality, within the limits of performance set by his original, does not flag.

Greek and Latin when used in the service of poetry can acquire a virtuosity of rhythm and sense which becomes intractable. Attempt at verbal fidelity in translation can turn into tasteless parody. The case with prose is rather different. Cicero's speeches, particularly in the written versions we have, may not represent the vernacular, but they have to be close enough to it to be effective in a courtroom of muttonheads, and the style of his letters is even closer. The vernacular of any language is always more transferable to its equivalent in any other than is the case with verse. The gulf between poetry and prose, as measured in terms of semantic manipulation, was wider in antiquity than it is today, and nowhere wider than in the condensed paragraphs of the *Aeneid*. One simple way of putting it would be to say that the poet's diction and syntax are continuously manipulated in response to the variety of his rhythms, rather than the other way around, as we assume to be the case with modern verse, in which we look for the intended "sense" of a statement to which the metrics have been adjusted. No two successive Virgilian hexameters convey identical rhythmic "meanings." Not only do they represent "the stateliest measure / Ever moulded by the lips of man," but also the most emotive and evocative. The elements of what we would call the "meaning," and which we would like to extract and place in statements which are clear and straight-forward, are conveyed acoustically, not conceptually, and the effect of the resonance can become ambivalent, as though more than one level of signification were present. All Latin poetry of the classical period, before its bowdlerisation in the early Middle Ages, though composed in writing and for readers as well as listeners, retained some closeness to the genius of verse orally composed and deemed of sufficient cultural importance to merit memorization. The lines must invite recitation by their melody. This accounts for the high proportion of rhetoric in classical verse, and par excellence in the *Aeneid*. When, as legend has it, the author took a whole day over one line, he knew what he was doing. The poem was intended to be not only a national archive but an encyclopedia of memorable and quotable sentiments.

But the sentiments are sophisticated in a way in which Homer's aphorisms are not; they reflect the subtleties of a literate and reflective intelligence which pulls the narrative along with it, but sets the direction itself, never more so than in the account of Troy's capture and destruction, reported by a consciousness which stands back from what it has seen and experienced, and speaks not as a partici-

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pant in the action but as its spectator: the narrated disaster is occurring in his own mind.

> Sorrow too deep to tell, your majesty,
> You order me to feel and tell once more;
> How the Danaans leveled in the dust
> The splendor of our mourned-forever kingdom—
> Heartbreaking things I saw with mine own eyes
> And was myself a part of.

Literate poetry can become an act of memory in a very direct way. Its own statements uniquely composed can at the same time become recollections of a previous model, antique and revered, to which tribute is now being paid. Virgil, Dante, and Milton are the supreme practitioners of this craft. The Homeric "borrowings" in the *Aeneid* are often called imitations as though they represented an exercise in graphic copying. Rather they are in the nature of mutations which convert a remembered original to new purposes, in a manner familiar to students of the history of painting. It is as though the Roman author were admonishing his reader: "Yes, here is a memory of Homer, but what I want to say is not what he said." An excellent illustration of this rule occurs early, in a parallel between Aeneas and Odysseus both beset by a storm at sea. The Greek hero alone on his raft may despair, but he is desperate and defiant; his Roman counterpart, an admiral commanding a fleet, is discovered in a moment of mental and moral collapse. A situation is recalled, but its psychological content altered.

Such manipulation of allusive memory is one—but only one—of the secrets of what has been called Virgil's intensified style. It is not something he has to work up to: it makes its first appearance in the first three lines of the epic, which are perhaps familiar (and hackneyed) enough to stand quotation in the original:

> *arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris*
> *Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit*
> *litora: multum ille et terris iactatus et alto . . .*

Matching these three verses against Fitzgerald's equivalent, one discovers some of the ground rules of an ancient tongue which have to be broken if it is to be transmitted to a modern one, and what has to be missed when they are broken. The Latin opens with a self-contained statement occupying only the first half of a hexameter. In English the same statement is extended into a complete line of blank verse: "I sing of warfare and a man at war."

In the original this is expressed in only three words (including the suffix *-que*), of which two are dissyllables and one a tri-syllable. The English rendering is put together out of eight monosyllables

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and one dissyllable, a total of nine. If the genius of poetry is acoustic, requiring pronunciation of a given diction controlled by rhythmic measures, the English "version" is not a "translation" and never could be. It is an act of paraphrase whereby one kind of rhythmic thinking is partly explained—but only partly—in terms of another. "I sing" is not a "word for word" translation of *cano*; how can the sound of two words be a faithful translation of the sound of one? Multiply this one simple act of acoustic shift a hundred times, and then add those supplements to the Latin genitives, datives, and ablatives, which require the addition of an "of," a "to," or "by, with, or from," and you start to build up sharp staccato sequences of short syllables inserted between the words of the original.

Moreover English has taken away the significations of the Latin terminations and put them into separate words. This act of analysis has the effect of breaking up the synthetic "names" of actions and things into distinct pieces. The corresponding "names" in English, shorn of terminations, tend to become shorter than the corresponding Latin; "sing" and "man" become monosyllables, replacing *cano* and *virum*, dissyllables.

One only has to read on, in Fitzgerald's version or in any other, to realize that this kind of mutation taking place in the course of transfer from a synthetic language to an analytic one is obvious and inevitable. These quantitative differences, applying to comparative numbers of words used and their comparative lengths, respond to a profound difference between the geniuses of ancient Latin and modern English, a difference of structure which at bottom reflects two different levels of consciousness. Latin would prefer when possible to avoid giving the personal performer of an action his own verbal identity: when it can, it prefers to merge him with his action. It prefers to avoid giving relationships between things separate identities by using separate words for them: it prefers to merge these when it can into the names themselves, by adding a suitable termination. Thought processes (and that also means the sensations they register) are packaged together rather than broken up into separate progressive steps.

This means that Latin poetry is always putting together words which are longer than English would use; it also means that the end of a word is treated as having as much importance as its beginning, and that must include acoustic importance. This fact, a morphological one, may be more than anything else responsible for the way in which Greek and Latin verse is scanned by quantity: the only way to force acoustic attention on the end of a word, as opposed to its beginning, requiring the voice to linger over it. If I pronounce the word "farthing," a rather deaf person sitting near me might think I had said "father." The stress accent of English falls on the opening of the word, not its closing. If I use a word of five syllables, such as "indescribable"—a rare event in English—the first three get their

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share of acoustic attention, and the voice even lingers over them in a quantifying manner, but the last two are slurred. They do not have the semantic importance of a Latin termination.

The morphology of the classical tongues therefore requires that when encased in poetry the verse that results must be enunciated at a slower pace, even as the words used are fewer: each word carries a weight which is fractionally heavier than the English counterpart, and correspondingly it is packed with a little more meaning, since it is likely to symbolize both a thing and its relationship to other things. It is a truism that quantitative measures like the hexameter cannot be imitated in English because of the modern shift from quantity to stress accent. Fitzgerald's loose iambic pentameter is a substitute, not even an imitation, but its choice is inevitable if the version offered is to be true English, and not an artificial exercise.

The choice carries its own penalty: such "meanings" put into Virgil's verse as depend specifically on rhythmic manipulation are usually lost, and have to be lost. This hard fact about all English translation of ancient verse has to be accepted, as also the conclusion that the problem arises not out of a mere accidental convention whereby stress happens to have replaced quantity, but out of some alteration in modes of thinking.

In the words *arma virumque cano*, an experience is described in a way which organizes it quite differently from the English equivalent. The nine words of the latter are like a sum in addition, where you know each number completely before you add the next one to it. They begin with "I sing." One can stop just there; the two words make sense: they constitute a self-contained statement: However, one next adds "of warfare." This does not complicate matters, or force any reappraisal of what has been said already. It merely adds some further information which modifies its scope, as is true also when the rest of the line is added.

Meaning is conveyed cumulatively by progressive addition of items each of which is self-contained: the mind advances with the words and does not have to go back.

Not so when the poet pronounces *arma virumque cano*: the first word exists suspended in a mental vacuum. It is presumably either a grammatical subject or object, but which? The second, *virum*, by its termination gives the next clue: we are dealing with grammatical objects, but of what verb? The third word and only the third solves the puzzle and completes the sense. "Arms" and "man" are not being captured or destroyed or lost or whatever, but "sung," and by an "I." In Latin syntax, statements are furnished in whole parcels of words in which no part of the statement makes sense until the whole parcel is tied together in the mind. The expression of human experience, and probably the experience itself, takes the form of a series of self-contained situations, over which the mind pauses and waits to comprehend them as wholes, rather than sensing the sepa-

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rate components into which the situation can be divided. It is a habit of mind and of language which encourages imagist thinking at the expense of conceptual thinking, which is also atomistic thinking.

Any English version of a piece of Latin poetry will on the one hand be more staccato than the original, and on the other a more limpid but less enterprising procedure, a sum in simple addition, verbally speaking, as against a series of acts of suspended imagination. Acoustically, because of the semantic force of terminations added to the force of word stems, the syllables become notes sung in a score, a melody not a drum beat. The English stress accent is a drum beat; the Latin verse quantities respond to the resonance of a plucked string, even though the Homeric musical accompaniment has been discarded.

Aeneas' introspective account of the sack of Troy is introduced by one of the most melodious hexameters in the epic, and the saddest: "*Infandum regina iubes renovare dolorem . . .*" The listener does not know what the line is all about until he reaches the last word. So he waits, tense (as also is the audience described on this occasion) as the line unrolls slowly, heavily. Out of fifteen syllables, nine are full notes: they make up only five words, no monosyllables, and only one dissyllable.

> Sorrow too deep to tell your majesty
> You order me to feel and tell once more.

The effect of the original could be likened to the long deep tolling of a bell. It is not criticism of the translator to say that in his two extended and largely monosyllabic lines that is what we miss. It has to be missed because the genius of English forbids the possibility that it be copied. In fact, within the limits imposed by his medium, Fitzgerald has responded to the original effect by repeating the resonance of "tell" in two successive lines.

Even as much is lost, much also remains, more indeed in this great English version of a great Latin epic than is likely to be found anywhere else.

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MARK JARMAN

Storytelling Verse from Oxford

THIS ANTHOLOGY[1] OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN CALLED The Oxford Book of *British* Narrative Verse. Of the fifty-nine poems included, six were written by poets from this side of the Atlantic, and these tokens could have been deleted. Only "The Code" by Robert Frost is identifiably American. The others—"The Wreck of the Hesperus" and "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" by Longfellow, "The Raven" by Poe, "The Tale of a Pony" by Bret Harte, and "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by English-born Canadian Robert Service—are such old standbys they have lost any national flavor. Of course, a greater American representation, especially from the twentieth century, would have been an improvement. Yet, since the anthology's concentration is so clearly British, it would be best to deal with it on that basis.

In their preface, the editors Iona and Peter Opie state that the book "pretends to be nothing more than a storybook." But it is more than that. In fact, although the editors believe they have gathered the best stories in verse, and recommend reading the poems first for the tales they tell and then returning to them to enjoy how they are told, there are poems here whose tales are not the point at all. "The Rape of the Lock" and "The Hunting of the Snark" we read first for how they are told with little regard for what is happening. If the editors had paid more attention to narration, they might have thought twice about a number of poorly narrated poems they have included. This would have made room for a more generous selection from other English-speaking peoples.

The most influential storytelling poets of the British are Chaucer, Milton, Pope, and Anonymous. Two selections from *The Canterbury Tales* are included, an excerpt from Book II of *Paradise Lost* retitled "Sin and Death," all of "The Rape of the Lock," and such popular ballads as "Robin Hood and the Monk," "Tam Lin," "The Babes in the Wood," and "King Estmere." Yet the best periods for narrative verse are the Romantic and the Victorian. From Burns' "Tam O'Shanter" and Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" to Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The White Ship" extend about 100 years of great narrative poetry. With the commencement of the twentieth century both the form and the Opies seem to lose their way. It is in this period, too, that

[1] THE OXFORD BOOK OF NARRATIVE VERSE, selected and edited by *Iona and Peter Opie*. Oxford University Press. $19.95.

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American poets are particularly slighted, since they ought to dominate it.

Chaucer leads off the anthology, and it is hard to find a single later poet who is better at telling a story or, rather, since this is his genius, creating a character to tell a story *in* character. Although the modernized spelling detracts slightly from Chaucer's zest, one of the interesting elements of his tone remains intact: an abiding amusement, deeper than any irony, in the way the story is told. In the two selections here, entitled "The Cock and the Hen" from "The Nun's Priest's Tale" and "Death and the Three Revellers" from "The Pardoner's Tale," one can sense the genius pleased with his form. What we lack, unfortunately, is the sense of the character he has created to tell the tale, especially in the latter poem, since the Pardoner's complex understanding of his own hypocrisy and corruption impinges on the story itself. As for the well-known tale of "Chauntecleer," the actual story of the fox who outwits the bird only to be himself outwitted is as brief as Aesop. The bulk of the poem is a satire of medieval medicine and scholasticism with a cast of mock-heroic fowl: the telling *is* the tale.

My insistence on the importance of this, that in some significant cases the narrative poem is valued for the manner in which it is told, is to make a place for some modern American poems missing here. I am also supported by the Opies' own scholarship, which suggests that many poems here are retellings of traditional stories. Obviously, narration often supersedes plot.

Thirty poems are included from the Romantic and Victorian eras, and many of the best look back. "Tam O'Shanter" has the same amused slant on its moral message as is found in Chaucer. Certainly, the poem appears to be an argument for temperance, and anyone who drank late like Tam might, in the end, be a horse's ass as the poem's last line implies. However, as the Opies note with respect to such moral tales, there is a black comedy inherent in their caution that puts a yeasty head on the most horrible of them. Robert Southey—much maligned Poet Laureate and butt of Byronic and Carrollesque jokes—contributes two superbly awful poems of divine justice, "Inchcape Rock" and "Bishop Hatto." Particularly in the latter, it is the conception of the evil Bishop's fate that inspires our pleasure. As retribution for killing the local peasantry in a single barn fire, 10,000 Rhine-fording rats get him and eat him. Here the pithiness of Anonymous, that maker of violent ballads, is present. As for the elegant Alexander Pope, he is strangely echoed in the anthology's single most powerful poem, "Peter Grimes." Here are Pope's heroic couplets and nicety of detail, but George Crabbe gives us an anti-world (even his name is like a polar opposite of the Enlightenment poet's, the counterweight of an undersea nadir). Finally, in the selections from Keats and Tennyson, two Miltonic elements are strong: music and imagery, the play of words singing or

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grinding together and the setting of unforgettable scenes. For vividness especially, the beadsman regarding the effigies in "The Eve of St. Agnes" and Sir Bedivere in "Morte d'Arthur" dazzled by the jewels in Excalibur's hilt recall the picture of Satan meeting Sin and Death, his family, for the first time.

The great surprise of this stretch comes toward the end with Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market." It is distinguished in a number of ways. First, unlike many other narrative poems, it recalls neither the iambic pentameter line nor the ballad form; it is in a rapid and falling rhythm of no more than two trochees or dactyls per line, which seems to be Skeltonic. Then, its moral center is ambiguous, for the forbidden thing is to eat fairy fruit, which can be a symbol of quite a few forbidden things, after all. The action of the poem itself is ancient, recalling as the Opies rightly point out the fate of Homer's locus eaters and Persephone's penance for eating pomegranate seeds. The perversely masculine little goblins, enchanting one sister and threatening another, also engage the contemporary reader. And how the unenchanted girl endures what could be called an attempted rape to save her sister, who has eaten the goblin fruit, gives the symbolism a new depth. The poem ends "For there is no friend like a sister" and this seems to point to a kinship beyond glossy and rosy Victorian sisterhood. It is a fascinating poem.

As wonderful as many of these narrative poems are, most will be familiar. The Opies note that the original idea for the book belonged to Edward Thomas who never got to complete it. Just as World War I ended any plans he might have had, it seems that the new century has baffled the Opies, too. In fact, the modern period has eluded them completely, making the narrative poem seem to be a relic.

To correct this error and to make room for some more modern narratives, I would delete six poems whose absence would not interfere too much with the anthology's plan. First, although it would cancel him altogether, I would get rid of Dryden's "Cymon and Iphigenia," a bore throughout its 640 lines. Wordsworth, who is represented by "The Idiot Boy" and "Alice Fell; or, Poverty," is much better in the latter than the former. "The Idiot Boy" goes on and on, hammering out contrivance after contrivance in order to put one unintentionally poetic remark in the title character's mouth. I would keep the shorter "Alice Fell"; with Crabbe to compete with, Wordsworth is best giving only a glimpse of the meek and the poor in spirit. Tennyson is well represented by his Camelot pieces, but I would drop "The Lady of Shalott" and retain "Morte d'Arthur." The former has a beauty it shares with Keats, but its plot and its ending are ironic in an adolescent way. As for Longfellow, if he must be in here, make it "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" and sink "The Wreck of the Hesperus." The ballad form he attempted

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to revive is not revived: the Opies find a saltiness in it I cannot savor. Browning with three poems is the most liberally represented poet, and that seems fair enough since he is so gifted at narrative. He seems almost to have invented verisimilitude, even though realism escapes him. Keep "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" and "The Italian in England" and turn " 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' " back over to Harold Bloom. Finally, the biggest waste of space here—twenty pages—is Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum." "The Forsaken Merman" is also inlcuded and its music and story are haunting, painfully melancholy, and much better than "The Lady of Shalott." However, "Sohrab and Rustum" is an absurdly long piece of English Orientalism on an operatic scale, with a death scene as long as an aria. The outlandish, inappropriate metaphors are obvious attempts at epic simile. The Opies draw our attention to them, but it is hard not to wince at, for example, this one about the Persian warrior Rustum seeing Sohrab, the son whom he will kill unwittingly in single-handed combat, waiting for him on the field.

> As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
> Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
> Who with numb blackened fingers makes her fire—
> At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
> When the frost flowers the whitened window panes—
> And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
> Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
> The unknown adventurous youth . . .

If, in some second edition, these superfluous poems could be cut out, my figuring makes room not only for a more representative selection from modern American poets, but others from the English speaking world, if that is to be Oxford's farthest boundary. Although the Opies claim they have excerpted only from longer narrative poems and sometimes deleted the discursive parts of poems like Byron's "Beppo; a Venetian Story," I find these apologies disingenuous enough to say that an excerpt is an excerpt and if it's fine narrative poetry, who cares where it comes from? So, my first addition would be three selections from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," those beginning "Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore," "Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth," and "Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?" From Emily Dickinson I would select "There's Been a Death in the Opposite House," which is as realistic as "Alice Fell" and certainly not to be faulted because it is more lyrical, and "I Started Early, Took My Dog," which is no more fantastic than any other of the lyrical fantasies the Opies have included. Moving into this century, rather than the usual chestnuts from Robinson (who is disgracefully omitted here, anyway), for "Sohrab and Rustum" I would substitute "Isaac and Archibald,"

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which is half the length and totally without the pretensions. To Frost's "The Code" I would add "A Servant to Servants" to reinforce the importance of narration itself whether or not a story is actually told. Then, from William Carlos Williams I would choose "The Last Words of My English Grandmother" and, for the incredible compression of its story, "Dedication for a Plot of Ground." From his contemporary Ezra Pound, I would introduce "Near Perigord" not only because it does tell a mysterious tale but makes the telling part of the tale, since the meaning of En Bertran's song is sought but never discovered. Similarly, Robert Penn Warren blends action and comment until they seem one in "The Ballad of Billie Potts"; I would include it. And lastly, I would include Elizabeth Bishop's excellent ballad "The Burglar of Babylon."

I would stop, as the Opies do, with what might be called modern poems rather than choose from the contemporary confusion, even though I know there are good contemporary narrative poems to be found in America as well as Britain. However, to register another dissenting opinion, I am left seriously to wonder at the choice of the inoffensive, almost apologetic "Ballad of Barnaby" by W. H. Auden when "Victor" and "Miss Gee" also come to mind and are much better. As it is, Auden's is the last poem in the anthology, which allows the book to end as sweetly and softly as the voices of the angels who bear Barnaby to heaven. The Opies are the noted anthropologists who have studied children and have also served as editors of *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse*. They seem to have done a thorough and complete job on that project. Yet, I wonder at the thinking of the Oxford people. It could have been something like "The Opies are experts in the field of children. Story poems appeal to children. The Opies would be perfect editors for a book of story-telling verse." Thinking that way causes even "Peter Grimes" to lose some of its grimness. I can also see a certain amount of acceptance by the Opies of standard opinion with respect to narrative. First, there is the British chauvinism. Then, there are second-hand remarks, like the one that "Death and the Three Revellers" is one of the best short stories in existence or that Kipling, represented by "The Ballad of East and West," was "the greatest ballad writer of all." But most disturbing is the note that Poe's "The Raven" was the product in part of Poe's "laudanum-laden" imagination. There is about as much laudanum in that poem as there is chloral in D. G. Rosetti's "The White Ship." Anyone who believes that old lie about Poe still buys the smear by his infamous literary executor (and hangman) the Rev. Griswold. I do not think this matter of received opinion is minor when considering why the Opies' representation of the modern era is incomplete. It makes this whole English pudding of a book seem underdone.

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JAMES FINN COTTER

Poetry Marathon

REVIEWING POETRY IS LIKE WATCHING A MARATHON. At first all one sees is a moving wall of poets until individuals separate out in single file along the route. Usually the reviewer stations himself at the end of the race and reports only on the finalists—at most a dozen of them. For once, to get a sense of the entire race, let's position ourselves at the start to see as many runners as possible.

Seamus Heaney with his Mad Sweeney catches our attention immediately.[1] This ancient king of Ireland is the hero of an epic that counterpoints poetry and prose in its swift narration. Sweeney, for his bad temper and violence, is transformed into a bird-man that perches in trees, feeds on watercress, and flees human company. Insanity is his inspiration as he sings nature's praises, preferring swans and stags to people, and mountain glens to his own castle. His flight is his curse, and he never escapes the pain of estrangement. "God has exiled me from myself," he mourns. In the course of the poem he is caught and returned home, recovers his sanity, only to be tricked by a hag into further adventures that end in his death. The centerpiece of the story is a long hymn to the trees and terrain of Sweeney's wanderings, an inward image of his outward fate. In this spirited version, Heaney delivers all the drama of the hero "on the run," an unforgettable figure, like Icarus, Lear, and Stephen Dedalus, in the demesne of myth. Shut away in the Irish Texts Society edition since 1913, this Sweeney is a winner.

Russian entries include some heavy favorites (no Olympics here!). The nineteenth-century author Mikhail Lermontov has, for the first time, received substantial attention for his poetry through the labors of translator Anatoly Liberman.[2] All the lyric poems are here and a number of the longer narratives. Two hundred pages of notes and commentary make this a valuable scholarly bilingual text. Liberman adheres strictly to the original meter and rhyme scheme and attempts to write in a Byronic style. Unfortunately, the results are often sing-song, old-fashioned, and tame, with forced syntax and far-fetched rhymes. Compared to another translation of some

[1] SWEENEY ASTRAY: A Version from the Irish, by *Seamus Heaney*. Farrar, Straus & Girous. $13.95.

[2] MIKHAIL LERMONTOV: Major Poetic Works, trans. by *Anatoly Liberman*. University of Minnesota Press. $39.50.

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of the same narrative poems by Charles Johnston,[3] his lines sound wooden. "The sun that warmed and burned her land / Had made her cheeks and forehead tanned. / Her glowing face and mouth breathed heat," writes Liberman in *Mtsyri* or *The Novice*. Johnston renders the same lines more felicitously: "Sultry days / had covered in a golden haze / her face, her breast; and summer's glow / breathed from her mouth and cheeks." Examples might be multiplied, but judge for yourself with this passage from *The Demon*:

> The camels looked in silent fear
> At many corpses lying near
> And at the sand with blood besprinkled;
> The only sound that one could hear
> Was from the bells that shook and tinkled.

That by Liberman; this by Johnston:

> Now calm rturned; the sheepish flock
> of camels on the road, in shock,
> gazed back upon the dead, astounded;
> and in the still of steppe and rock
> dully their little bells resounded.

Both versions are readable, but Liberman's suffers from stilted inversions and facile rhythm while Johnston's benefits by subtle pace and playful word placement. In addition to the Lermontov poems, Johnston's volume includes narratives by Alexander Pushkin; among them *The Bronze Horseman, Graf Nulin,* and *Onegin's Journey,* omitted from *Eugene Onegin* which Johnston also previously, and splendidly, translated.

Jon Stallworthy and Peter France have collaborated on an elegant translation of selected poems by Boris Pasternak.[4] The poems from *Doctor Zhivago* are especially fine, with their religious dignity and symbolism. The dramatic lyric, "Hamlet," sums up the daring of this writer's career as a poet and translator of Shakespeare. The final statement, "Life is not a stroll across a field," is a concise understatement of his struggles as an author whose works were often officially banned. Of his personal task, Pasternak wrote:

> In everything I want to reach
> The very essence:
> In work, in seeking a way,
> In passion's turbulence.

[3] NARRATIVE POEMS, by *Alexander Pushkin* and *Mikhail Lermontov*, trans. by *Charles Johnston*. Vintage. $5.95.

[4] SELECTED POEMS, by *Pasternak*, trans. by *Jon Stallworthy* and *Peter France*. Norton. $15.00.

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The translation possesses that "naturalness" which the poet saw as the quality of great poets, striking you dumb "When you come to recognize and know it." "It Has All Been Fulfilled" expresses a sense of destiny in the simple picture of a walk in the snow as birds chirp in the distance. Stallworthy and France have written a sensitive critical introduction for this edition. The whole book is worthy of this world-class author.

Mary Maddock presents translations from works of three Soviet women poets, Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetayeva, and Bella Akhmadulina.[5] Each speaks in her own voice of public and private pain, of exile within one's homeland. "How our dry Russian mud / thirsts and thirsts for blood!" Akhmatova exclaims. She is intent on hanging her harp among the branches no matter what the cost, not to protest but to speak from her own heart. "On a White Night" describes a woman waiting for her lover: "I was so sure / You would have come by now." The need to speak is always inherent in this poet's lyrics. Tsvetayeva, who committed suicide, is more desperate in her loneliness: "Every house is alien to me, every cathedral empty, / everything is the same, everything just the same." "Poem of the End" is a series of fourteen poems about private lives separating in public streets as two lovers leave the city's center and depart in the suburbs. The writing is marked by broken phrases, questions, exclamations, repetition, asides, and irony. Akhmadulina, the youngest of the three poets, employs a more flowing but still highly confessional style. Where Pasternak used snow as an image of chaos and conformity, she sees it as a symbolic release in "Snowless February." At first the poet is blocked and frustrated: "I can't write as I want / and to write as I can—what good is it?" Gradually, as snow falls, she feels blessed: "I'm in love and am loved, / and my finished book opens before me." In his preface, Edward J. Brown praises Akhmadulina's "A Fairy Tale About the Rain," but it is not included. Maddock offers brief forewords and notes that prove helpful. But Akhmatova's first husband's name is spelled differently in two places.

Czeslaw Milosz, Nobel prize winner in 1980, offers a bilingual version of his poems in translations by Robert Hass and Robert Pinsky with Renata Gorczynski and the author.[6] Milosz shores these fragments against his ruin, the loss of his native Poland and his years in exile. Memory preserves the past and reveals the present—in the title poem, "The Separate Notebooks," this happens to be Berkeley in the seventies. The original poems are more consistently rhymed than in the translations, more traditional in their lyric form which contrasts with their discontinuous content. "Without you, what am I?" the poet asks his mother tongue, and responds, "Only

[5] THREE RUSSIAN WOMEN POETS: Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetayeva, Bella Akhmadulina, trans. by *Mary Maddock*. The Crossing Press. $6.95.

[6] THE SEPARATE NOTEBOOKS, by *Czeslaw Milosz*. The Ecco Press. $17.50.

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a scholar in a distant country" and "a philosopher, like everyone else." "How can laments and curses be turned into hymns?" he wonders, managing to do just that in poems like "Bypassing Rue Descartes," "Veni Creator," and "How Ugly." Milosz recreates the streets of his native city, his parents at home, an artist-friend killed for harboring Jews, as well as the California coast and even an Indian peddling a bicycle uphill in Death Valley. Pictures remain in the mind long after the poems have passed, the achievement of a true poet.

Josephine Miles is identified with Berkeley as poet, professor, and scholar. Her collected poetry—really a selection—comes as a summing-up of a lifetime commitment to her craft.[7] Gathered from eleven previous volumes and her uncollected poetry, this book sets out the limits that she defines in an early poem, "Enlightenment." Not for her "the high-powered radiance," all she wants is "one or two facts to go by." For her, "a morning of clarity and distinction" involves students and teacher exchanging questions and answers about a book, "As if we had all been reading it." She desires only to preserve "this day's simple fact" which it grants to her. When she stays within these limits—as she does in poems about Berkeley in turmoil with police, tear gas, and hovering helicopters—she is graphic, convincing, even compelling. But when she slips her own boundaries into issues of politics, philosophy, and poetry to treat them abstractly, not enough tension and imagery sustain her verse; she grows wordy and slack. Wisely, she omits many poems from two sixties' collections and includes most of her recent work which keeps improving, particularly in shorter lyrics like "Family," "Away," "Album," "Goodbye," "Officers," and "Afternoon Walk." Some poems aim so low at unpretentiousness that they turn out as prose; but, prose or poetry, they have an honest appeal in their colloquial matter-of-factness and self-deflating humor. Long training gives these poems stamina and speed.

Nikki Giovanni could use some of this discipline in her latest collection of verse.[8] She writes superficially about public figures like John Lennon, Martin Luther King, and Robert F. Kennedy, and complacently about her private loves and dreams. She is best on the few occasions when she shows humor, mocking herself and mixing up words, but her sound effects and rhetoric make it evident that these pieces exist as texts for auditorium readings rather than personal absorption. They are written as prose with hundreds of dotted interruptions: ". . . it's nonetheless true . . . that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. . . . Perhaps pitiful thing would be more

[7] COLLECTED POEMS: 1930–1983, by *Josephine Miles*. University of Illinois Press. $17.50.

[8] THOSE WHO RIDE THE NIGHT WINDS, by *Nikki Giovanni*. William Morrow & Co. $4.95.

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accurate . . . though that too is not profound. . . ." Too true. . . . Galileo and not Copernicus, by the way, was forced by the Church to recant. . . . Not to run on. . . .

Howard Nemerov handles his facts with accuracy and control. His new collection—the first since his Pulitzer Prize winning *Collected Poems* in 1978—arrives to cast a cold eye on the contemporary scene.[9] The title poem, "Inside the Onion," strips away the layers to analyze the mathematics of our imperfections. Nature, "Mad Housewife," has made the onion "One and the same throughout the in and out," and that is cause for tears. "Reading Pornography in Old Age" reminds the poet, ironically, of life in Eden before the Fall, "when we were beautiful / And shameless," and not yet driven out "to the laboring world / Of the money and the garbage and the kids." Many poems smack of sour grapes, but the satire tastes right in "Imprecated upon a Postal Clerk" (a surly attendant behind a counter), "Disseverings, Divorces" ("weddings that went / From woo to woe, from courtship through the courts"), and "Facing the Funerals" ("Men have their faiths as coffins have their handles, / Needed but once, but handy to have them"). Religion takes some hard raps in "Last Things," "Prayer of the Middle Class at Ease in Zion," and "An Act of God." "She" is a funny bit about Dante's wife writing to Ann Landers on her husband's obsession with a dead woman. Toilet graffiti and Chinese scrolls provoke uncommon responses. Of the temperate poems, "The Present Past" is most eloquent: "But brief as flowering / Has always been, our power to attend / Is briefer by far, and intermittent, too." Nasty or nice, Nemerov remains in top form.

Richard Eberhart has put together his uncollected poems from 1948 to 1984 for a new volume.[10] "Vignettes" offers a gossipy recollection of other poets: Yeats, AE, Auden, Jeffers, Lowell, Thomas, and others. Frost wittily sums up a conversation with John Kennedy by quoting a line of his own poetry: "I did all the talking." In "Harvard Stadium," the poet recalls Wallace Stevens sitting like a deity watching the football game below. For Eberhart, poetry is the life force in an age of assassins; he pleads for life through praise of other poets and by his own poetry. He is best describing things that catch his attention, like a field mouse protecting her babies or a swallow feeding bugs to her birdlets. At other times he tends to preach. "Life is incontestable. / Death is immeasurable," he ruminates; "But why talk about it?" Why, indeed? Such generalities detract from the "true mortality from poetry" that Eberhart cherishes. Like his heroes Keats and Hopkins, however, he provides sufficient "poetry of the flesh" to sinew his vision in most of his poems.

[9] INSIDE THE ONION, by *Howard Nemerov*. University of Chicago Press. $9.95.
[10] THE LONG REACH: New and Uncollected Poems, 1948–1984, by *Richard Eberhart*. New Directions. $16.00.

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John Tagliabue's vision is panoramic; his second comprehensive collection of poems, from 1962 to 1983, contains a variety of forms and themes.[11] Vegetables, space travel, Oriental thought, Shakespeare, the coast of Maine, and his prolific correspondence are some of his subjects, all served up in a breezy style that is exuberant, if sometimes exhausting. "Take up your sound of soundlessness," he exhorts the poet-musician, "and trumpet it over the gods, / they will be happy, / they need you." There is a genuinely moving sequence of poems on the poet's father, a restaurant-owner who enjoyed laughing and unflinchingly faced sickness and dying—"my unpossessive Father with a sense of grace never ruined Eden." A hearty love of living, books, music and dance sets many of these poems in motion: "I listen to messages from all things / that sooner or later are speaking directly to me." At times, however, the message takes over and one misses the still point on which a poem must turn. Some verses parody themselves by mimicking Whitman and Hopkins, but most are full of surprises and reveal a true personality.

In the title poem, "Falling From Stardom," of his third book of poetry,[12] Jonathan Holden contrasts the wish to be brilliant, to say something bright, with the inner star of a child's vision seen in a drawing of the sun with sticks for beams. To be a star is to be one's self and not an "assortment of methods" that promise success. The emblem is valid for Holden's ambition for his own poetry, and he achieves it in poems like "Elizabeth," about a Korean baby who dies before she can be adopted, a star extinguished, and "On the Roof," a glimpse of his family below as he works on his roof. Holden etches landscapes deftly, "the blue fugue of shadows out on the snow" and "the high hot jazz of October / in the tips of the maples" ("*Billet Doux*"). "First Snow" captures the wonder of seeing the familiar transformed by comparing the scene to a new view seen from a train window. "The Men in the Hoboken Bar" demonstrates his ability to fashion interior scenes as well. His own "assortment of methods," however, shows through in set pieces that develop carpentry, hunting, and sex as analogies for defining his own masculinity. Poems using baseball heroes like Whitey Ford and Dale Long are too predictable, while Sam Spade as a pathetic sleuth in retirement and Liberace as an object of scorn are pat caricatures, like sketches prepared for a creative writing class. This poetry is more at ease in framing actual incidents, as in "The Edge," with his son riding with him high on his bike, or "Leaving the Fire," than in set fictitious pieces like "Scene From a Novel" which substitute cartoons for creations of insight.

[11] THE GREAT DAY: Poems 1962–1983, by *John Tagliabue*. Alembic Press. $14.00.

[12] FALLING FROM STARDOM, by *Jonathan Holden*. Carnegie-Mellon University Press. $6.50.

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Richard Howard presents his new book of poems through a series of historical personages from the Belle Epoque, legendary characters of Greek myth, and people he knows.[13] The title poem, "Lining Up," establishes the gallery analogy for what follows; there is even a set of daguerreotypes of famous painters, musicians, and writers, accompanied by poetic commentaries. Delacroix, Corot, Berlioz, France and others are presented as sitters for the photographer Nadar; the poet converses with each person posing for his portrait. These dramatic monologues act as masks of Howard's own search for the relation between reality and art, between the passing moment and the object fixed in time, whether photograph, painting, musical composition, or poem. This self-consciousness is occasionally obtrusive, without that Keatsian negative capability to identify with the experience. One notes that there is scarcely any female presence in these poems. Jane Austen appears as a wise old maid and Penelope as a disappointed realist, but no *anima* animates the portraits. Howard is a master of the double take, the hesitation that gives way to quick recognition. He cleverly extracts his own attitudes from the vast classical and romantic information packed in his lines. They are chock-full of puns and allusions from Homer to Eliot; speeches of Shakespeare surface and fade. Baudelaire, Charles Dodgson, Proust, and Ford Madox Ford take part as listeners or partners in dialogue. The mask of irony is exquisitely carved, but the face behind it peers out with dark and empty eyes. The poet parodies Keats: "The Greek pot / and THE GREEK POTHOLE are one," identifying a red-figured calyx from Naxos with a bar in Texas. In both, figures move "with an undisturbed absence at the center." Art and the real race at last into the same void.

David Ignatow offers his most recent collection as a meditation in prose and verse on death and the direction his own life has taken.[14] The design of the book is circular, moving ever inward around "the vacuum" of the author's own being until it centers in the final piece on acceptance of his own death. He tells his wife: "With death before me, I look back at my pleasures and they were you whom I held close in loving, and in the poems I've written for this truth, which is their beauty and lets me die in pleasure with myself. I did not fail my life" (no. 64). The complacent note has been hard won because the previous sections are full of pain and self-blame for the author's failure as a father, husband, and man. "Whatever contribution I was to make to living," he writes, "has been made, yet living has gained nothing / from it but a sharpened sense of its futility / for me" (no. 17). Not much difference exists between prose and poetry in these entries which call to mind Kafka's stories and Kierke-

[13] LINING UP, by *Richard Howard*. Atheneum. $13.95; $7.95.

[14] LEAVING THE DOOR OPEN, by *David Ignatow*. The Sheep Meadow Press. $13,95; $7.95.

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gaard's journals. Unlike them, however, narrative thrust does not create a dynamic central character; Ignatow is too much like the passive vase to which he compares himself: "I am a vase holding a bunch of flowers / in my depth, with water in it" (no. 38). Yet the reader must admire the honesty everywhere apparent in this work and the effort required to make such a confession.

Confessional poetry becomes *True Confessions* in Sharon Old's second volume of poems, the 1983 Lamont Poetry Selection.[15] Her book presents a cycle of public and private instances of suffering and death, but it exploits the people it describes and sensationalizes events, although her family must be a real rogue's gallery of weirdos. Grandfather and father were hate-filled drunks and their wives their bitter opponents. The author writes of her own children carrying the same seeds of self-destruction which she is intent on rooting out before they grow up poisoned. In many poems sex organs keep popping up, menstrual blood flows, copulation thrives, girls pee on one another and boys play war games. Everything is physical—which is good—but these bodies have no souls. Olds keeps upping the stakes but her bluff doesn't work. The symbolic stuff of literature, its grace and strength are missing; she ends by bringing to poetry the personal violence that already perverts so many other areas of our culture.

Faced with a world of poverty and deprivation, Jayanta Mahapatra is well justified in the pessimism of his eighth collection of poetry.[16] "This is the kind of sadness which closes the eyes," he observes in "Evening Landscape by the River"; "Here the memory for faces of the dead never appears." Fishermen's broken shacks, a six-month child crawling "across the dung-washed floor" of a hut, and the moon "like a familiar but useless ornament" spread the gloom from poem to poem, unrelenting and inevitable. The poet finds himself alienated from the people, their politics, religion, and culture. Children in a classroom, "shrunk like caged slaves," a father's indifference, sons lost, homeless women and dispirited men, arid dust and ceaseless rain are signs of failed purposes, like a benediction deprived of its meaning. Even poetry changes nothing as he asks, "But what use is a poem, once the writing's done? / Words looking for what, in the dark of the soul?" It is like the "sound of a match striking, then over" ("Last Night the Poem"). Yet, "When all else has failed, / the poem's words are perhaps justified." Here the grief of Job, Mad Sweeney, and Hopkins speaks with moving authenticity: "Awaking at night, I always return / to the black world," while "pain for the slight light of dawn / assails me" ("Iron"). In "An Impotent Poem," Mahapatra declares to himself: "Now the heart says: you must find a new way, / try to turn the desire you hold into fierce

[15] THE DEAD AND THE LIVING, by *Sharon Olds*. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.
[16] LIFE SIGNS, by *Jayanta Mahapatra*. Oxford University Press. $4.95.

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power." However, the poem's title tells the answer. "Will a poem of mine be the only answer?" he asks again; but his own aging flesh betrays "the philosophy my poems seemed to profess," for "the sleepless line I walk on leads nowhere." As he turns to face his life in the final poem, the author does only what he has done throughout the book, look and despair: "In the end / I come back to the day and to the rain." Such pure sorrow touches the tears in things because it is born of self-knowledge.

From Indian introspection to American extroversion: Michael Blumenthal in his second book of poems pursues happiness with a passion.[17] From the opening "Night Baseball" to the closing "*Dayenu*" (a litany praising God's blessing in creation), this book seeks to celebrate life with intelligence, freedom, and verve. "The Happy Poem" is a manifesto of the poet's right to protest "against self-imposed suffering" and "false piety and sadness." "In Assisi" rejects the asceticism of Saint Francis in favor of the hedonism of love-making and bodily pleasures. He blesses life for what it offers him and for what it has failed to give. Like other poems in the volume, this love poem states the sacred meaning of physical love as a share in the Perfect Joy of the saint. "Last Supper" begins:

> None of us is Christ, really,
> or even a hero, yet, in the
> luminescence these candles lend to
> our faces, it could be that every man
> and every woman is a hero.

However, we live at odds with what we need and often end by betraying "the hero that lives inside us." Since there is a woman inside every man, "not beautiful / or divine," each must discover her and follow her ("The Woman Inside"). Blumenthal can satirize himself ("Today I Am Envying the Glorious Mexicans") and nature itself ("Dung Beetles"), but his true scorn is for the wealthy: "If only the rich would suffer in silence, // As the poor do" ("I Am Sick of the Rich"). A complex relationship with his father is developed in different poems, to be resolved in the last part of the volume. In fact, its five sections take up a number of motifs like a musical composition to bring them to a final thematic statement. This is an extremely confident and competent work. Blumenthal bears watching.

Robert Pinsky probes the story of his own life in his third volume of poetry.[18] He works from the center to the circumference, from personal memories into history and the outer world. The paradigm appears in the first poem, "The Figured Wheel," a cosmic prayer

[17] DAYS WE WOULD RATHER KNOW, by *Michael Blumenthal.* Viking/Penguin. $14.95; $9.95.

[18] HISTORY OF MY HEART, by *Robert Pinsky.* The Ecco Press. $12.50.

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wheel that spins through time and space to roll over, finally, "Robert Pinsky's mother and father / And wife and children and his sweet self." A visit to a Krakow death camp leaves him unchanged, yet leads him to address a wry prayer to God. The way lives interpenetrate underlies all the poems and is explicitly examined in "The Changes." The title poem, "History of My Heart," expands childhood memories from his mother's recollections through to his own youth, as if from the womb to a growing consciousness of self. Playing music becomes an allegory of his discovery of poetry in the rhythmic beat of the heart "until sometimes / In the course of giving itself it flows out of itself / All the way across the air." The diameter from the center shapes symmetry in all kinds of remembered situations: a campsite near a fire with dark encircling trees, patients in his father's office and the world of nuns and prayers in the present, a woman's narrow fears and a boy's longing to be free to go to the beach, and his neighborhood from within houses and stores and the strange streets outside. Poetry is a way of recovering and holding onto experiences fading into oblivion where relatives, schoolmates, and the dog next door have disappeared. Pinsky's poetry rewards repeated readings for he makes his own memory reach out and move in the reader, heart flowing to heart.

In his first book of poems, published in the Yale Series of Younger Poets, Richard Kenney touches his experiences with the wand of myth.[19] James Merrill, new judge of the series, writes an introduction that commends the poems for their "agreeable eddies of temperament." "Flood tides" would be more appropriate than "eddies." The poetry employs a diction that plunges headlong from sentence to sentence, stanza to stanza, through allusions and happenings that carry the reader onward. One need not grasp every detail, of course, but one is often left dazed with motion rather than emotion. A long poem, "Notes from Greece," offers rapid glances of towns, cities and islands, a tourist review with wide learning and mystical intensity. Marginal notes, like those for *The Ancient Mariner*, mark the stages of the journey. Other poetic series use Lowell's sonnet-form and charged syntax to narrate inner and local histories from Paleolithic times, Celtic and Renaissance periods, to the present day. "I've jewelled / old memories in mind with such care," he confesses, that inner and outer time are synchronized. Poems fuse the bubbles of events as in the glass blowing art which Kenney sees as an image of his craft. Like ice breaking up in spring, bringing an end to iceboating, boyhood and the past recede: "I think / how we are swept, and changed" ("Sailing"). Kenney so hurls himself into places and things that it is easy to be whirled into a maze. "St. George's Channel" holds the focus forcefully in the flight of

[19] THE EVOLUTION OF THE FLIGHTLESS BIRD, by *Richard Kenney*. Yale University Press. $12.95; $5.95.

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pitched-up gulls, "a whirl and white gust of petals, / mud-marked, flocking sails." This volume makes an impressive, if somewhat over-impulsive, start on a poetic career.

The level tone of Herbert Lomas in his new book of poetry[20] is peculiarly British, but susceptible to frequent disruptions, like discovering he lives in a haunted house where glasses shatter and doors open and shut on their own. Things assume a life of their own in Lomas' action-charged world that places himself firmly in the middle. "Down the Hill" describes a youthful love triangle with a daft girl in love with his best friend who was gay: "I in love with her, / And she with him: I don't know where / They are now—and know too well to care." A visit to Greece occasions objective observations and understatement, while a monologue of Mrs. Hardy tells of her estrangement from her novelist husband. The title poem, "Fire in the Garden," offers three reflections on Dante's journey as a type of facing death amid the distractions of everyday life. Whether serious or comic, Lomas keeps his eyes and ears open to the world, awe-struck at a cathedral in Helsinki or imagining growing up with a sister who died at birth. Seeking solitude for reverie and writing in a cemetery, he finds it a perfect spot to be robbed and buried. Whether he is gazing into the sad eyes of a cow or meeting a famous poet in his cups, words never fail these colorful and colloquial descriptions. His is a champion style.

In her first book of poems, Emily Grosholz speaks with assurance about the purpose of poetry and her practice of it.[21] Beginning with an image of Chinese poet-painters inscribing a scroll, she claims for poetry the function of gathering friends and drawing out the secrets of the heart. In the poems that follow, she writes letters to friends, hears from them, and recollects her own life. Recounting stays in France, Italy, and Greece, she captures setting and situation, not as a passing tourist but as a person involved with others in place and time. This is particularly true of a group of poems set in Paris: seeing a landlord's son for the hypocrite he was ("97 rue Compans"), shopping for shrimp on the rue des Pyrénées ("Souvenir"), and listening to friends playing flute and violin as children sing ("The Last of the Courtyard"). In Rome, she relishes old books, fireplaces, and coffee; at Jumièges, she feels her own loss in the abbey ruins; and back home at Edgewood Park, she misses her scattered friends. "Letters from a Gardener" is a sequence of letters purportedly written by a friend from a Buddhist retreat in New Mexico; it breathes a deep sense of an actual voice and of spiritual peace. Other poems mingle events with philosophy in a natural way; she recalls the theft of her mother's jewelry as an experience of all she has lost materially and still possesses interiorly, and she wishes for her small daughter at the beach the freedom of the sea.

[20] FIRE IN THE GARDEN, by *Herbert Lomas*. Oxford University Press. £4.50.
[21] THE RIVER PAINTER, by *Emily Grosholz*. University of Illinois Press. $7.95.

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Happily, there is even a poem, "Marathon," to sum up the poet's course, as a runner who races in a timeless cycle:

> The voyage that he runs will never end
> as long as time suspends him in the green:
> his limbs fail, and are mended one by one;
> his heart breaks, and is filled again; his bones
> throw tendons, which like vines rewind
> about their bole; his nerves fire off and on.

Dionysus-like, poetry renews itself through the poets who surrender themselves to its power and mystery. Grosholz is on the right track and well on her way.

DORE J. LEVY

A Quest of Multiple Senses: Anthony C. Yu's *The Journey to the West*

The Journey to the West (Hsi-yu chi)[1] is a monumental work of prose fiction based on the travels and travails of the seventh-century Chinese monk Hsüan-tsang in his mission to India to worship the Buddha in the land of his birth and to bring back Buddhist scriptures for the enlightenment of the Chinese people. The hundred-chapter version, published anonymously in 1592, has had the most universal and enduring appeal of any of the classic Chinese novels. Its appeal has not been lost on Western readers, but until now *The Journey to the West* has only been available in English in paraphrase or in much abridged forms. One of these, Arthur Waley's *Monkey: Folk Novel of China*, has entertained a broad readership since its first publication

[1] THE JOURNEY TO THE WEST, trans. and ed. by *Anthony C. Yu*. University of Chicago Press. Volume 1, 1977; Volume 2, 1978; Volume 3, 1980; Volume 4, 1983. $35.00 each.

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in 1943.[2] Unfortunately, *Monkey* includes only about a quarter of the original text, and Waley has left many readers wishing to know more of Hsüan-tsang's fictionalized adventures. At last they can. Professor Anthony C. Yu of the University of Chicago has produced, in four volumes, a complete, faithful, and fully delightful translation of China's most beloved novel.

The historical Hsüan-tsang (596–664), or Tripitaka as he is known after the scriptures he procured in India, was the most famous of the many Chinese pilgrims who braved the perils of land or sea to reach the homeland of their faith. Tripitaka was a child prodigy in religion and grew to a position of fame and respect even before his great pilgrimage. He left China secretly in 627, reaching India by the devastating overland route in 631. Here he studied and traveled widely, impressing almost everyone with whom he came into contact with his erudition, zeal, and skill as a rhetorician. He returned to the T'ang capital, Ch'ang-an, in 645, bearing 520 cases of Buddhist scriptures. He devoted the rest of his life to translation and to propagating the doctrine of the Fa-hsiang or Dharmalakshana School of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Tripitaka also left a record of his travels, *The Great T'ang Record of the Western Territories* (*Ta T'ang hsi-yu chi*). This travel book was, in effect, the first version of *The Journey to the West*. It is no wonder that such a mission, fraught with mortal perils and sustained by faith, should have caught the popular imagination. *The Journey to the West* is the culmination of an enormous volume and variety of marvelous tales based on Tripitaka's pilgrimage. As the tale evolved, the saintly monk acquired four magic disciples to aid and protect him on his journey. The principal among them, best known to Western audiences as Monkey from Waley's version of the story, is probably the most popular character in Chinese literature. The other disciples include a sensual, slothful hog-spirit, Chu Pa-chieh ("Pigsy" in Waley's text), who undertakes the journey to expiate his transgression of making improper advances to the moon goddess; Sha Monk ("Sandy"), a sand-spirit banished from Heaven for breaking a crystal dish at a celestial banquet; and an adolescent dragon who has been disowned for carelessly setting fire to his father's palace and burning some precious pearls, here transformed into a white horse to carry Tripitaka to the West. In addition to the five pilgrims, the entire populations of Heaven, Earth, and even the Underworld eventually participate in the adventure. The novel is a religious and social allegory which embraces every member of the Chinese pantheon, every facet of Chinese thought and every segment of Chinese society.

The mystery of the anonymous author of *The Journey to the West*

[2] *Monkey: Folk Novel of China*, trans. by Arthur Waley (London: The John Day Co., 1943; New York: Grove Press, 1958—twenty-first printing, 1980).

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has never quite been solved. The most likely candidate to emerge is Wu Ch'eng-en (c. 1500–1582), a minor official under the Ming dynasty with a modest reputation as a poet and perhaps a greater one as a satirist, but his authorship has not been proven conclusively. This kind of anonymity is a feature of other important works of Chinese fiction. It seems strange that authors of such remarkable works should remain resolutely obscure. It is as if Ariosto could not finally be identified as the author of *Orlando Furioso*, or as if Fielding had published *Tom Jones* anonymously and without being identified as the author by any of his contemporaries. It is true that the *hsiao-shuo* or novel in China was regarded in the early stages with the same kind of suspicion as its European counterpart. Certainly the Chinese model displays a similar vernacular idiom and ironic intent, and perhaps anonymity ensured the novelist greater freedom of expression. Whatever the author's actual identity, we are in the presence of a polymath of Chinese learning, a virtuoso of literary composition, and an absolutely wicked wit.

The author of *The Journey to the West* is most fortunate in having Anthony C. Yu as his translator. Professor Yu's full list of titles includes Professor of Religion and Literature at the Divinity School, Professor of English, of Far Eastern Languages and Civilizations; he is a member of the Committee on Social Thought and the Committee on Comparative Studies in Literature at the University of Chicago. He has edited *Parnassus Revisited: Modern Critical Essays on the Epic Tradition* (Chicago, 1973), published many articles on the history of religion and literature, most recently "Two Literary Examples of Religious Pilgrimage: The *Commedia* and *The Journey to the West*" (*Journal of the History of Religions*, February, 1983), and translated English poetry into Chinese. Yu brings to the translation of *The Journey to the West* a range of accomplishments as extraordinary as those which the author brought to its composition.

The result is felicitous for the text and the reader. Not only does this translation supersede all previous efforts, it also brings out generic peculiarities which in the past have been modified or ignored by translators in order to suggest smoother comparisons with European works of fiction. One of the most distinctive features of the Chinese novel in general and *The Journey to the West* in particular is the frequent occurrence of poems in the narrative, not just as poetic speeches and rhetorical descriptions, but as an integral part of the flow of the prose narrative. This is both the result of literary conventions responding to the flexibility of the Chinese poetic language, and a demonstration of the author's literary virtuosity. *The Journey to the West* contains some 750 poems in its hundred chapters, representing almost every poetic genre in Chinese literature. These act in the service of the narrative as a whole, enriching the description, the action, and the dialogue.

The use of poetic narrative is a unique and delightful feature of

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Chinese fiction, but one that has posed problems for Western audiences and translators. Even Waley, whose own poetic genius so enhanced his translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry, shied away from the poetry in *Monkey*. Yu has plunged gamely into the enterprise, and while he cannot always project the subtle nuances of the poetic forms, he has succeeded in producing an integrated and satisfying text with all the poems intact. This fidelity adds immeasurably to our ability to appreciate a work of literature so different from anything in our own tradition.

Another distinctive aspect of the novel which is intimated in Waley's abridgement but can only be fully appreciated in the complete version is the underlying allegorical structure of *The Journey to the West*. We can recognize simple elements of the allegory in *Monkey*, such as personifications and the nature of the pilgrimage itself. The complete novel, however, participates in an intentional mode of composition similar to that which characterizes such works as Dante's *Commedia* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*; that is, the functioning of symbols, action, and language in a text in such a way as to project complex patterns of meaning beyond the literal level of the text. The author does utilize many of the more obvious conventions of allegorical composition: personifications and symbolic names (the Many-Eyed Fiend, Demon Lord of a Hundred Eyes, gives a lesson on the perils of perception in Chapter 73), symbolic iconography (Pa-chieh's mighty muckrake), and chapter titles, many of which are epigrams which indicate the significance of the chapters' contents. These features provide a concrete apparatus which serves to guide the reader on the pilgrimage. There is also, as might be expected, a plethora of technical and symbolic Buddhist terminology, but in addition, the text responds to the intellectual climate of the author's time in the integration of Taoist and Confucian elements in the pilgrims' spiritual universe. In short, Buddhism provides the framework of the mission, which in its fulfillment embraces the diversity of all Chinese thought. The journey is a physical symbol of the process of karma and redemption, and an allegory in which spiritual processes dominate over ascetic or alchemical ones; indeed, over institutionalized spiritual seeking of any kind. The significance of this process extends well beyond the boundaries of the text in time and space, and transcends the cultural context of the work with direct ease.

With this in mind, it is no surprise that the plot and cast of characters of *The Journey to the West* are far removed from the realm of the ordinary. In his critical introduction, Yu divides the narrative into five main sections. The tale begins not with the origin of the hero, Tripitaka, but with the magical birth and rambustious early career of Sun Wu-kung, or Monkey (Chapters 1–7). Monkey springs fully conscious from a stone egg, and celebrates the miracle of his birth with an astounding appetite for acclaim, activity, and

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knowledge. In pursuit of immortality and fame, he leaves his monkey kingdom to study under a Taoist patriarch, but while he masters many subjects he learns no self-restraint. He defies the lords of the Underworld, raids the treasuries of dragons, assumes the title of "Great Sage, Equal to Heaven," and finally disrupts the Heavenly routine with his uncontrolled ambition and energy. Only the Buddha is able to subdue him, and he pins the hapless ape under the Five Phases Mountain to await an opportunity for redemption.

> Taught to be manlike since hatching from an egg that year,
> He set his aim to learn and walk the Way of Truth.
> He lived in a lovely region by ten thousand kalpas unmoved.
> But one day he changed, dissipating vigor and strength.
> Craving high place, he flouted Heaven's dominion;
> Mocking sages, he stole pills and upset the great relations.
> Evil, full to the brim, now meets its retribution.
> We know not when he may hope to find release.
>
> (Volume 1, p. 174)

In the second section, the Buddha reveals his intention to impart elements of the Buddhist canon to the benighted people of China (Chapter 8). The Boddhisattva Kuan-yin, goddess of mercy, undertakes to make the arrangements for the pilgrimage, which will both bring greater knowledge of Buddhism to China and also allow one of the Buddha's first disciples, the Elder Golden Cicada, to redeem his sin of dozing off during one of the Buddha's lectures. The Elder Golden Cicada, after several lifetimes of perfecting himself, has been incarnated as none other than the monk, Tripitaka. On her way to recruit the scripture pilgrim, Kuan-yin encounters and converts the monsters destined to become his disciples including, of course, old Monkey. All profess themselves willing to follow the way of the Buddha and swear loyalty to the pilgrim who will come from the East to deliver them.

The third section deals with the birth and early career of Tripitaka (Chapters 9–12). Along the way, the author provides a detailed look at the court of the T'ang emperor T'ai-tsung and the events leading up to his wholehearted support of Kuan-yin's expedition. The eighty-one trials pre-ordained for Tripitaka in his lifetime—the completion of which will bring him to Buddhahood—begin at his birth. Tripitaka's mother is forced to set her infant son afloat on a river to preserve him from the bandit who has killed her husband, assumed his official post and made her a prisoner. The child is found and brought up by the Abbot of the Temple of Golden Mountain. Eventually he discovers his origins and through the force of his faith rescues his mother, avenges his father's death and even brings his father back to life. This brings him to the notice of T'ai-tsung, who seeks spiritual guidance after an unsettling journey

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through the Underworld. Kuan-yin arrives in the capital and reveals herself, offering a miraculous cassock and nine-ringed priestly staff for the scripture pilgrim.

The pilgrimage proper then begins, and comprises the bulk of the text (Chapters 13–97). Tripitaka collects his disciples one by one, and the growing devotion of this motley fellowship to one another and to their enterprise is part of the spiritual journey which accompanies the physical one. Each pilgrim has certain idiosyncrasies which impede his progress toward enlightenment. Tripitaka is a rather fastidious and literal-minded creature, who while he preaches a doctrine of the emptiness of sensual phenomena complains vigorously of cold, hunger, and inconvenience. Monkey is excessively impatient, easily frustrated and incited to violence. Pa-chieh is lazy and disingenuous, yearning for enormous meals and comfy domesticity. And so forth. Each pilgrim must perfect himself for his own good and for the sake of the enterprise, but some need more help than others.

For instance, in Chapter 14, the need to control Monkey's impulsiveness is the reason for the acquisition of one of his symbolic attributes. This episode demonstrates the allegorical structure in obvious ways, which in turn have subtle resonances in later episodes. Right after Monkey's release from the Five Phases Mountain, he and his master encounter the Six Robbers. Tripitaka is reduced to a helpless jelly by their threats, but Monkey calmly challenges them and learns their names: Eye that Sees and Delights, Ear that Hears and Rages, Nose that Smells and Loves, Tongue that Tastes and Desires, Mind that Perceives and Covets, and Body that Bears and Suffers. In short, these "six hairy brigands" are none other than the six senses, which the pilgrims must subdue utterly in order to reach their goal. Monkey understands their true nature and summarily uses his cudgel to exterminate them. Tripitaka, however, is completely unable to perceive the illusion of the Six Robbers, and is horrified by Monkey's apparently wanton act of violence. He then gives Monkey a magic cap provided by Kuan-yin with a spell for restraining Monkey, the True Words for Controlling the Mind or the Tight-Fillet Spell. As soon as it is on his head, it takes root, and the recitation of the spell gives Monkey sensations of excruciating pain. In his rage, he even threatens his own master, but eventually accepts that he has only himself to blame for this restraint.

Another kind of ordeal is presented in the form of demons who wish to capture the T'ang monk. Male demons want to eat a piece of his perfected flesh in order to achieve immortality; female demons seek to obtain his semen, unspilled through ten incarnations, for the same purpose. The demons may be destroyed, converted to Buddhism, or revealed as heavenly spirits planted in monstrous guise for the sole purpose of providing the obstacles the pilgrims must overcome in order to progress to the Buddha's Thunderclap

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Mountain. Nature, human society, and fantastic beings all contribute to confounding, educating, and amusing the pilgrims and, incidentally, the reader.

When the ordeals are exhausted, the pilgrims are allowed to meet the Buddha, receive the designated scriptures (after having produced a suitable gratuity for their heavenly curators), and impart them to a jubilant Chinese population (Chapters 98–100). They are then received back into the Buddha's circle and promoted in the pantheon according to their achievements. There is some irony about this process: Monkey is still quick to anger, Pa-chieh's appetites are not perceptibly diminished, and even the saintly Tripitaka, when he has to be pushed into the bottomless ferryboat provided for the crossing to the Buddha's mountain, grumbles at Monkey over the dunking he receives. Such a display hardly seems to merit the testimonial poem:

> Delivered from their mortal flesh and bone,
> A primal spirit of mutual love has grown.
> Their work done, they become Buddhas this day,
> Free of their former six-six senses' sway.
> (Volume 4, p. 384)

What then is this enlightenment? Old Monkey perhaps best expresses the gains they have made when Tripitaka thanks his disciples for their efforts when they finally reach Thunderclap Mountain:

> "We two parties need not thank each other, for we are meant to support each other. We are indebted to our master for our liberation, through which we have found the gateway to the making of merit, and fortunately we have achieved the right fruit. Our master also has to rely on our protection so that he may be firm in keeping both law and faith to find the happy deliverance from this mortal stock."
> (Volume 4, pp. 384–385)

This comment on the journey implies that the process and the end are really one, and without the process, the end could not be valued. However, the pilgrims' ultimate success seems to depend more on the realization that the act of striving for enlightenment is itself illusory. Each pilgrim has his strengths and his foibles, but most of their difficulties seem to derive from their active desire for knowledge, for progress, and their pertinacious pursuit of transcendence of the mortal sphere. The irony of these failings is both humorous and sympathetic. The reader laughing heartily at the antics of beasts, peasants, clerics, government officials, demons and celes-

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tials may find that the last laugh is on himself, as an inevitable and susceptible member of this mortal community.

Waley's *Monkey* and Yu's *The Journey to the West* represent radically different approaches to the novel and to the enterprise of translation, but considered together provide provocative insights into the evolution of our understanding of Chinese fiction. The shortcoming of *Monkey* is that is seems, by the episodes selected and their mode of presentation, to cater to a popular notion of the novel rather than representing the novel itself. In this, Waley was conforming to the views of a new generation of Chinese critics opposed to the traditional, complex interpretations of the work. Dr. Hu Shih, one of this century's most influential proponents of Chinese language reform and the introduction of Chinese literature to the West, was delighted with Waley's abridgement, since it conformed to his preference for considering the novel in terms of the popular tradition. In his introduction to the first American edition of *Monkey*, Hu wrote, "Freed from all kinds of allegorical interpretations by Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian commentators, *Monkey* is simply a book of good humor, profound nonsense, good-natured satire and delightful entertainment" (*Monkey*, p. 5). Hu's pronouncement is misleading in precisely the way *Monkey* is misleading. *The Journey to the West* is no more a "folk novel" than Boccaccio's *Decameron* is a collection of "folk tales." Both have generous helpings of material from folk traditions, but this material is integrated into larger contexts, elegantly and subtly structured. By rejecting a major part of the traditional interpretations, Hu and Waley risked rejecting a major part of the novel, and ultimately its integrity as a work of art. *Monkey* is delightful but limited. It captures the fun, but does not touch the profundity.

Yu's first commitment is to render as faithfully as possible the entire text, but he also carries with him the constant awareness of the gap between this translation and the original. In "The Better Form of Treason: Reflections on Literary Translation" (*Criterion*, Summer 1978, pp. 9–13), Yu remarks on the paradox of his enterprise: "As I continue to work on the *Journey*, I am more convinced than ever that a translation may be completed in the temporal sense, but it is never finished . . . I am at the same time . . . acutely aware of the truth of Voltaire's admonition, 'Souvenez-vous toujours, quand vous voyez une traduction, que vous ne voyez qu'une faible estampe d'un beau tableau' " (p. 13). True indeed, but the essence of the enterprise is not to finish the text, but to entice the reader with the representation to respect and even long for the original.

Yu's literary scruples and personal enthusiasm occasionally combine to produce some rather self-conscious effects, and in striving to reflect the exuberance and variety of the original he occasionally produces a semantic misfit. For instance, in Chapter 54, the pilgrims attend an uproarious royal betrothal banquet supposedly in

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Tripitaka's honor. Pa-chieh is in his element, and when running dry hollers, "Bring some big steins! After we drink a few more steins, each of us will attend to our business" (Volume 3, p. 65). The Chinese *kuang* is actually a cup made of horn, and while Pa-chieh is never elegant in his manners, this palace is not a beer-garden. Similarly, bandits block the pilgrims' way in Chapter 97 and threaten, "Quickly give us some toll money, and your lives will be spared! If only half a no escapes from your mouth, each of you will face the cutlass" (Volume 4, p. 362.). The Chinese *tao* is the most general word for a hand-held blade, and considering that the pilgrims are probably several hundred miles from the nearest ocean, another kind of blade might have been more appropriate. There are also a few jarring patches of informal usage which are questionably justified by the Chinese and produce effects in English more nonsensical than nonchalant.

Such observations pale in the face of the marvelous flow of the text as a whole. Even with worse faults than these, a complete translation must be regarded as actually more faithful to the original than any abridgement. Yu's translation is infinitely more faithful than any previous version in form, content, and even spirit. In addition, his textual notes are careful and comprehensive, dealing with esoterica and "in-jokes" with equal clarity. Yu has made his translation as useful to scholars of Chinese literature as it is accessible to non-specialists, although for the sake of both one could wish for a glossary of names and the unavoidable Sanskrit and Pali terms, as it is often impossible to remember them and discouraging to hunt for them in the notes.

Literary translation is one of the most constructive forms of cultural embassy. Professor Yu has produced a translation which allows the *The Journey to the West* to take its place as a masterwork of prose fiction for the consideration of Western literary scholars as well as Far Eastern enthusiasts. Exotic and magical as this journey is, the underlying heroic and spiritual themes are not limited to its fantastic context. As a work of allegory, *The Journey to the West*'s structure of multiple senses informs an oddly-assorted pilgrimage with wisdom, humor, and humanity. As a work of fiction, this quest provides, in the words of Tripitaka's favorite textual companion, the *Heart Sutra*, "O what an awakening!"

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JEFFERSON HUNTER

China Books

A "CHINA BOOK," YOU COULD SAY IN THE THIRTIES, as you could say with equal offhandedness a "Balkans book" or a "Mexico book" or a "Persia book," and people would know what you meant. You meant travel literature. You meant an Englishman's or Englishwoman's (it was a strikingly English genre) reflections on a journey through some insufficiently known part of the world. There would be descriptions of landscape, conversations with colorful innkeepers or plausible generalissimos, complaints about poverty or ignorance or perhaps just fleas, snatches of history, dish-by-dish exaltations of banquets alternating with stiff-upper-lip dismissals of road fare, biographical sketches of local luminaries (accompanied by photographs), and thoughts on the management of the current war (accompanied by end-paper maps). The whole would be held together, in the best examples, by some larger idea, some intensely felt private concern, such as the wickedness of empires, Turkish or German (Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Yugoslavia, 1942), the persecution of the Church (Graham Greene's *The Lawless Roads*, Mexico, 1939), or the magnificence of Islamic art (Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana*, Persia, 1937).

In the best China books from the thirties it is sometimes hard to locate the unifying ideas, or to reduce the unifying ideas to a phrase: the vastness—human, geographic, and historic—of the Celestial Empire worked against the observers' will to simplify. So did the political messiness of the decade. The Japanese, their Manchurian puppets, the Kuomintang, the Communists, the Russian emigres and agents, the British with their gunboats, all were struggling in bloody confusion among each other and rendering phrases like "Celestial Empire" more and more quaint. What comes most clearly out of books like Peter Fleming's *One's Company: A Journey to China* (1934) and *News from Tartary* (1936), or Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden's *Journey to a War* (prose by Isherwood, poems and photographs by Auden, 1939) is the sentiment of travel itself—that is, the sense of adventure as Western writers are set free from usual habits and sent out wandering over a larger and more dramatically moral arena than anything they had known in Europe, even the Europe of Hitler and Stalin. There are still delays to be endured, train tickets to be wangled, passages up to the front lines to be negotiated from suspicious warlords, but whether overcome or not, the practical difficulties do not prevent the travelers from seeing far into Chi-

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nese history and circumstances, or from feeling imaginatively liberated themselves. "Nothing is given: we must find out law," writes Auden in the sonnet sequence that closes *Journey to a War*, and "The life of man is never quite completed" and "We live in freedom by necessity"—sentiments for the recruiting poster, maybe, but also suitable mottos for the travel writer, who lacking freedom lacks a subject.

News from Tartary and *Journey to a War* are both in print, the first in the excellent new Library of Travel Classics series,[1] so readers may sample for themselves what an earlier generation made of China, and made of itself, for these travel writers are hardly so naive as to think of themselves as mere recording cameras. They are recording consciousnesses. They know they are seeing China through a cloud of European presuppositions which need to be openly talked about, assessed. The act of picture-taking provokes Peter Fleming to a speculation about what he is bringing, by way of finicky Western morals, to the reporting of harsh Chinese methods. Two bandits are caught and sentenced to be shot; before the execution Fleming photographs them both,

> without compunction but not without a vague feeling of embarrassment. They had only a few more hours to live; but the little I had seen and learnt of the effects of banditry was enough to dull all pity. Still, the conventional part of me found something queer and awkward in the thought that those two trussed bodies would be food for worms long before some chemist in a dark-room brought to light the figures they had cut on the threshold of death and dissolution. It was a situation which would have put Donne's muse on her mettle.

That paragraph is from *One's Company* (not yet, alas, reprinted), and it catches something of Fleming's English sensibility and equally English, self-deprecating wit. By playing the fool, Fleming the traveler preserves his protective coloration, Fleming the English gentleman his amateur standing. An amateur prophet Fleming may be (in *One's Company* he remarks of Mao that he is a "gifted and fanatical young man suffering from an incurable disease"), but after another book and much more time in the country he could justly be thought of as an old China hand, which is how Isherwood and Auden regard him in *Journey to a War*.

After the thirties the flow of visitors was checked by the war and the revolution; Henri Cartier-Bresson happened to be on hand to photograph the actual transfer of power to the Communists, publishing the results in 1954 in *D'une Chine à l'autre*, with a remarkable

[1] Peter Fleming, *News from Tartary*, J. P. Tarcher (Library of Travel Classics), 1982. Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden, *Journey to a War*, Octagon, 1972.

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foreword by Sartre.[2] Twenty years of frigid relations between East and West succeeded, until the unlikely combination of Chou En-Lai, Richard Nixon, ping pong, and pandas opened China again—first to government officials and bankers, then to distinguished visitors and journalists, and finally to anyone willing to pay the travel agency. China was once again copy, the China book a sellable and indeed highly promotable commercial proposition.

Hence the stream of writers following President Nixon to the Great Wall. He is alleged to have said of that structure, "Gee, that's a great wall," which gave them descriptive room to work in. Charles Meyer, Arthur Miller and Inge Morath, Jan Myrdal, Orville Schell, Roland Barthes, Barbara Tuchman, and many others have published China books in the past dozen years—some, of course, based on long acquaintance or scholarly research rather than mere travel, though few books pass up the chance to comment on personal traveling experience inside the People's Republic, or to include a few photographs, so great is the West's curiosity about the East (How much do the guides let you see? What do the ordinary Chinese look like? Have the young people in the parks started holding hands?).

China Diary, the record of a three-week trip undertaken by two distinguished Englishmen, the poet Stephen Spender and the painter and photographer David Hockney,[3] is typical of the recent China books in that it conscientiously tries to satisfy curiosity: the guides let you see only the localities they have chosen, it reports, though within those localities they let you move about freely, talking to and photographing whom you will; the young people in the parks, at least in Peking in the summer of 1981, haven't started holding hands yet; as for the ordinary Chinese people, Hockney records many of their faces in photographs or watercolor sketches—and with their faces their clothes and wristwatches, bicycles and phonographs, thermos sets and flower arrangements.

Visually, the book gives considerable pleasure. It is filled with color and imaginatively laid out (monochrome figure drawings are often printed over the text, so that you read about changes in education through the outline of a Chinese six-year-old). Hockney comments that as time on the tour grew more pressing he fell back more and more on the camera as a recording device, but this is hardly fair to his photography, which is not just recording. There is a splendid low-level view capturing the vast size of Tien An Men Square and the vast faceless anonymity of the crowds who move across its endless stones, and on the facing page a witty shot of a billboard (young Chinese womanhood marching confidently over a

[2] The English version, now out of print, substituted Han Suyin for Sartre: *From One China to the Other*, Universe Books, 1956. Readers may sample Cartier-Bresson's China photographs in his and Robert Shaplen's *The Face of Asia*, Viking, 1972.

[3] CHINA DIARY, by *Stephen Spender* and *David Hockney*. Abrams. $28.50.

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pedestrian crossing into the future) beneath which bicyclists whizz obliviously, on the criss-cross errands of routine life in the city. I liked also a color still life (apple-green thermos and tea set)—grainy like all the color photographs in the book, but plainly and beautifully composed—and a tossed-off watercolor sketch of the picturesque Kweilin hills. Best of all, perhaps, is Hockney's schematic rendering of the drive from the Peking airport into the city. This flat, non-perspectival, childish picture portrays not a view but a sophisticated Western taste suddenly encountering an austere, rectilinear view and having to make drastic re-adjustments.

From an epilogue (Spender and Hockney conversing in California, after their return) it seems clear that the collaborators explicitly discussed their collaboration, the relation between text and images to be sought after, and certainly the relation on view in the completed book is harmonious and satisfying. Text and images are equal partners. What Hockney does with line and color, Spender does with words: they give pleasure alike. Men and women are skillfully hit off, beauties noted, eloquences translated (badly, everyone laments, but at least translated), amiabilities recorded. *China Diary* amply justifies the adjectives ("vivid and entertaining," "enjoyable and enlightening") of the publisher's blurb. The "agreeable and gifted travelling companions" combine talents to produce a "delightfully illustrated account."

Let us not automatically despise enjoyment and delight. If we accept (as the Chinese did, for a while) the motto "Let a hundred flowers blossom," we can surely find room on our shelves (or, yes, on our coffee-tables) for *China Diary* and similar productions—vivid, pleasurable, ephemeral books, expressions of good feeling, testimonies to a spring-time thaw in international relations. The problem is that entertainment is not the only thing books can provide. Some books—the China books of the thirties, for example—provide political awareness, a sense of personal adventure marching in step with the national adventure of the war against Japan, an understanding of travel itself (its ethics, its justifications, its drawbacks and rewards), an ambitious if sometimes amateurish investigation of national character and prospects. Put next to *One's Company* or *Journey to a War*, *China Diary* seems thin. Keep it out of that company, then? That's hard to do, especially after one of the young Chinese poets our travelers meet says that he admires the Auden sonnets in *Journey to a War*.

History has moved on, of course. No longer does the Japanese air force daily provide something exciting to write about; no longer do the Reds march against Chiang. Contemporary China is less exotic than it used to be: at the entrance to the Kweilin caves Muzak sounds (Spender and Hockney try to avoid it). At the souvenir shops to which they and the other tourists are guided, art of a "worse-than-Disneyland vulgarity" is purveyed. "Guided": the word by itself implies the essential change. The China of 1981 is available only in tours, in escorted visits to model communes, model fac-

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tories, model schools (Spender and Hockney, appropriately enough, are taken to art schools and writers' institutes). The Chinese themselves have made it impossible for a latter-day Fleming or Isherwood to move haphazardly about the country, freely choosing an itinerary. They have made the freedom of movement on which true travel literature depends a memory. Simultaneously they have facilitated in every possible way the genre which *China Diary* ably represents—the literature of tourism.

I do not think, however, that the thinness of Spender and Hockney's book is attributable entirely to changed conditions. The authors seem to deny themselves certain responses, certain kinds of investigation, before the Chinese have a chance to do so. They bring to their encounter with Eastern values an apparent skepticism about Western values, doubting that one can learn much from asking questions and listening to answers, tacitly denying that books—books of travel, anyway—can accomplish much.

Should Spender ask a question which can only produce a Party-line answer? Isn't that insulting to the Chinese official involved? But isn't it equally insulting not to ask questions, thus demonstrating that one knows the person asked does not have an opinion of his own? From this thicket of nice doubts Spender finds no exit, though he acknowledges that not to ask is to be a bad reporter. Later, he decides that it is impertinent to go into people's homes and find out how they live. The penalty for such scruples is guesswork, superficiality, and (at worst) a reliance on that hoariest of Western reactions to China, the detection of inscrutability: seeing some children at play, he calls them "the most delightful of many mysteries this poetic country provides." Inscrutable too, apparently, are some terms an understanding of which one would think crucial to the writing of a book about the People's Republic: "I seem temperamentally incapable of understanding terms such as 'brigade,' 'cadre' etc." Spender: "It is impossible to comment on the Ch'ing Tombs." Impossible? Impossible to comment at all, however vast the Tombs, however short their time there? Hockney: "I think the book should be . . . a bit bitty—like life—patched up in some way, as if made by three schoolboys on a tour of the continent for the first time. I think that's the only way it will work." Impossible to make it work in any other way? Impossible to make the bits come together in a coherent picture, an understanding, a travel narrative rather than a tourists' diary?

Harsh criticism of an amiable book, to be sure. But a harsh Gresham's law of literature decrees that merely amiable books drive out provoking ones, easy genres challenging ones. The literature of tourism supplants the literature of travel. We cannot do a great deal about that until travel somehow supplants tourism once again—in the same millennium when the State, as Lenin and Mao have promised, is to wither away?—but in the meantime we must pay attention to the law's working lest we grow accustomed to the way it is imposed on us.

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JAY PARINI

The Limits of Expression

> And the light shone in darkness and
> Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
> About the centre of the silent Word.
> —T.S. Eliot, *Ash-Wednesday*

THE ARTS WITHOUT MYSTERY[1] IS AN EXPANDED VERSION of Denis Donohue's Reith Lectures, broadcast over the BBC in 1982. That Donohue conceived of these essays as lectures to a wide (and potentially hostile) audience is evident throughout; their tone is informal but combative, with the critic present as performing voice at every turn. One can almost *feel* Donohue's audience taking shape as he probes its contours, finding resistence here or there, anticipating counter-arguments well ahead of time. Each lecture is accompanied by "shoulder notes"—marginalia of an oddly digressive and sometimes irrelevant nature; added to these are lengthy commentaries in which the critic addresses his critics. One gets the sense that Donohue's listeners were waiting in the wings to pounce on every word. (He was not paranoid: they apparently were!) The final commentary, which follows the sixth lecture, ends with the verbatim reproduction of an essay published prior to the Reith Lectures, "On the Limits of a Language." This essay, in which Donohue reviews the provocative question of experiences that lie "beyond nature" and hence beyond language, seems to have precipitated the Reith series as a whole.

Given the format, it was perhaps inevitable that unevenness and superficiality should crop up. The unevenness takes the form of a periodic unwillingness to press a topic to its conclusion. In "The Parade of Ideas," for instance, he argues that political pluralism—a precondition of modern democracy—has led to the collapse of the unified audience which the arts once enjoyed. Now, he says, "There are hundreds of audiences, groups of people linked by miscellaneous interests." He goes on to discuss the effects of pluralism on the arts, as they are taught in universities or practiced by avant-garde specialists like John Cage. But one feels the topic sliding out from under him as he advances to the end (not the conclusion) of the lecture hour. He complains about dogmatism in the arts, taking a justified swipe at F. R. Leavis, who refused even to discuss his silly dismissal of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* with Lionel Trilling; he mentions that people get upset when boundaries of expertise are crossed, and he talks about Roland Barthes's famous essay on the

[1] THE ARTS WITHOUT MYSTERY, by *Denis Donohue*. Little, Brown. $15.95.

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popular singer Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, restating Barthes's point that "Fischer-Dieskau is flattering petit-bourgeois society by offering it an image of its own perfection." Okay. But one would love to see most of these points developed, grappled with, taken to the mat. The margins of Donohue's essay swarm invisibly with questions: Was there ever really such a thing as a "unified culture" or is that a myth used (too often) by critics to denigrate the contemporary world? Has the "politics of pluralism" hurt the teaching of literature and, if so, how can you tell? Shouldn't the canon of "great texts" undergo constant revision? And so on. Donohue seems to have answers to these and so many other crucial questions; he doesn't have the space, however, to work them out properly.

One aspect of Donohue's superficiality is the overuse of references. He is vastly learned. One knows this already from the string of splendid books he has written. But too many names, book titles, and references of all sorts, flicker through these lectures; they create an irritating static that one has to *listen through* to hear the real music of Donohue's argument. The trouble would hardly be worth it if Donohue were less good. But he is brilliant, one of our best critical minds, so we must listen. At crucial moments in each of the six lectures, he really bears down, bringing into lucid focus a point worth waiting for. Moreover, Donohue writes with a firm sense of values, from an avowedly religious (but not dogmatic) viewpoint. Our criticism is in such a state these days that the mere possession of a viewpoint, a place to stand, argues in favor of this work.

At the outset, Donohue states his aim: "I want to talk about the arts in relation to the mysteries that surround them, not as a problem to be cleared up but as the very condition in which they appear at all. In that sense mystery is to be acknowledged, not resolved or dispelled." He could not have chosen a more combative theme. Critics now feel an obsessive need to explain things—and explain them away. Mystery seems an insult to the intelligent mind. In our post-Positivist world, reality is reduced to "what can be said," and the rest is ignored or denied. It is as if we have yet to catch up to the later Wittgenstein, who probed the tragic limits of language with the intensity of genius in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Donohue nicely seizes Gabriel Marcel's distinction between *problem* and *mystery*. "A problem," says Marcel, "is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety." In short: problems demand solutions, mysteries do not; you witness and attend a mystery.

The unconscious project of society, in Donohue's view, is to remove mystery from the arts in order to defang them. One sees this happening almost daily as a President, say, quotes a line of poetry for his own political ends or a bank displays a revolutionary paint-

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ing in its lobby. Art is easily tamed, misread, appropriated for ends the artist never dreamed of and would certainly never condone. Donohue points out that artists are bought off by fame and money; they are brought "into the system" by universities, all eager to own a "creative staff." He makes a further obvious, but devastating, point: "Serious artists don't think of themselves as avant-garde, on the subversive margin of society, driven there by capitalism and the corruption of the market. The division of society into middle-class liberals and the rest has lost its meaning." What may loosely be called "bourgeois liberalism" has swept the board, and the old Romantic notions of the artist-as-rebel have largely faded. Andy Warhol is fodder for *People Magazine*, avant-garde architecture adorns our business districts, and Saul Bellow is a best-selling author. High culture has been assimilated, and this is mostly a good thing. A Beethoven symphony is no less magnificent because the performance is sponsored by Mobil Oil and available on a hundred million television sets. The downside of all this, however, is that art is often demystified, stripped of its elemental power to journey into "the heart of darkness." The mystery is lost in the mastery. Donohue writes: "There isn't much point in having the arts at all unless we have them with all their interrogative power." He associates this interrogative power with the "mystery" that lies behind what words or paint or musical notes can express: "The artist and the priest know that there are mysteries beyond anything that can be done with words, sounds, or forms. If we want to live without this sense of mystery, we can of course, but we should be very suspicious of the feeling that everything coheres and that the arts, like everything else, fit comfortably into our lives."

Donohue refers throughout to paintings, sculpture, and music, but he is uncomfortable on these topics and quickly scurries back onto native grounds—literature and criticism. As he proved in his last book, *Ferocious Alphabets*, he is a wily decoder of current literary theories. Not surprisingly, then, the best parts of this new book are where he deals with critics. He asks a pertinent question: "What kind of scruple would a critical disclosure observe, if it were to respect, rather than ignore, the mystery of the art it addresses?" He blasts Foucault, in particular, calling him "a moral terrorist" who meets the "anxious objects" of his criticism with "humanist categories designed specifically to take the force and the harm out of them." Unfortunately, Donohue doesn't pursue his quarry in the bushes: he backs off, almost too politely. He might have, in these essays, mounted a major attack on the self-conceited, reductive, and amoral criticism now thought to constitute the "cutting edge," especially in Yale or Paris. Deconstruction and post-structuralism remain minority cults, but the few critics who actually practice them have intimidated or outflanked those still writing in what Susan Sontag has referred to, snidely, as "the Matthew Arnold tradition." The

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purpose of criticism from the time of ancient Greece to our own has been consistent: to understand, interpret, and evaluate the forms of human discourse. When this central truth is lost sight of, the culture as a whole is threatened.

In his final lecture, Donohue laments the refusal to discriminate that seems rampant just now, when "pleasure is offered as a substitute for understanding, and value as a critical term has virtually disappeared." There is a general desire at large to describe the underlying system that makes the production of meaning possible—the essential Structuralist enterprise—what Barthes referred to as the empty meaning that sustains all meaning. This is in itself admirable. I would not want to argue for the withdrawal of criticism from epistemology, that branch of philosophy which investigates the origins, nature, methods, and limits of human knowing; in fact, one of the salutary aspects of the theoretical turn recent criticism has taken is the breaking down of disciplinary boundaries. But the fundamental critical act remains that of engagement with a particular aesthetic or cultural object. Donohue agrees, calling for a criticism that moves beyond a mere "appreciation" of the art object to "a phase of cognition, analysis, and action." He quotes R. P. Blackmur, who said that the act of judgment is "the last act in bringing particular works of art to full performance." But that final term—*action*. What does Donohue mean by it? It may have something to do with the fact that art is not without content, and content is translatable into action or response. Good words (or brush strokes or musical bars) are like promises that must be kept to be complete. Donohue suggests as much, but he might well have been more expansive or explicit.

Yet *The Arts Without Mystery* is an important book because it faces so many issues at the heart of our contemporary malaise: the unwillingness to acknowledge mystery, the way our culture domesticates and, thereby, defuses the mystery that generates art in the first place. More so than many, Donohue shows a deep understanding of what the arts *do* mean when they function correctly: "With the arts, people can make a space for themselves, and fill it with intimations of freedom and presence." My guess is that Donohue has found an opening here, and one looks forward to his next move.

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ALFRED CORN

The World Capital and Its Art

WHEN I WAS AT AN AGE TO BEGIN TO BELIEVE that a life in the arts was what I wanted, it never occurred to me not to plan to set out, sooner or later, for New York. The young aspirant of today, growing up in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, or Los Angeles, might not feel the same urgency, but the provincial of twenty years ago knew his best chances waited in the metropolis—which, in any case, harbored other enticements. From eighteenth-century Philadelphia, to early nineteenth-century Cambridge-Concord, to late nineteenth-century New York, the captaincy of American culture had been transmitted. By the 1950s, New York was the flagship of a developing international modernist art, outdistancing even Paris and at last equipped with a legend equal to the Ville Lumière's.

Telling the cumulative tale of that legend (engendered by non-artists as well as artists) is the subject of this new collection of essays[1] by a British author who, a few years ago, published *Imagining America*, a compendium of views of this country as recorded by foreign visitors. The author has no trouble calling New York the "world capital," and American culture clearly fascinates him. Yet he keeps a certain distance from his subject throughout the book. His method is neither to let New York artists speak for themselves (at least, not more than a sentence or two) nor simply to set down unmediated thoughts of his own about the city. Instead he summarizes the plots of novels and short stories, describes poems, paintings, and photographs, and gives brief "treatments" of films, interlarding these paraphrases with essayistic commentary that is often ironic and witty. The early chapters, those dealing with Washington Irving and Walt Whitman, Henry James, and Edith Wharton, perhaps with some literary diffusion from his subjects, are written in what used to be called belletristic style. But the later chapters, those dealing with, for example, Norman Mailer, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol, take on a more recognizably standard pop spontaneity and nonchalance that would go readily into glossy magazines.

For a non-resident, Peter Conrad has understood New York surprisingly well (though I think our current mixture of pluck, expediency, seriousness, and half-feigned insolence has eluded him). He

[1] THE ART OF THE CITY: Views and Versions of New York, by *Peter Conrad*. Oxford University Press. $18.95.

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knows to begin investigations with the inescapable icons—Miss Liberty, the Lower East Side, the Chrysler and the Empire State Buildings, and the Brooklyn Bridge. They have epitomized the abiding New York themes of immigration, poverty, and suffering, the amassing of capital, technological advances, and artistic or spiritual aspiration. It has seldom been the way of New York artists, he shows, to treat these as bald, urban furniture but rather as vessels of interpreted meaning, made over by the imaginations attending to them. Actually, his book title, *The Art of the City*, pronounced in Cockney, implicitly makes Mr. Conrad's contention: New York artists are those who have given "heart" to the city.

A heart of darkness it sometimes is. From *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* to the photographs of Jacob Riis, to Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* to Jules Dassin's *The Naked City* there has been a permanent tradition of social outrage, disgust, and a disillusionment or cynicism that is almost self-congratulatory. The infernal version of New York gets full exposure in this book. In fact, some readers may be surprised how much attention is given, for example, to the photography of Weegee, that tireless harvester of bad news. But, obviously, the subject excites the author's interest and provides him with grist for commentary of this kind:

> Photography is electrocution: that lightning bolt recurs as Weegee's glaring flashbulb, which stuns and deadens his subjects, executing on the spot a rough justice by exploding in the faces of the malefactors. Being photographed by Weegee was the equivalent of an arraignment. . . . Because photographic light is the blaze from a gun barrel, everything Weegee metaphorically shoots—not only those tagged and bloodied corpses in New York gutters—looks as if it might be dead meat, even if it's made of wax or plastic or paper.

Still, when the Weegee chapter (called "After Dark") follows up with a long discussion of the film-noir tradition, beginning with *The Naked City* and going on to give plot summaries of a brace of movies difficult to view even on late-night TV, one feels that the "tact" of space allotment has been violated. The performing arts get short shrift here—and what governed the choice of inclusions? If the plays of Elmer Rice, why not Arthur Miller's? If Busby Berkeley and *Guys and Dolls*, why not George Balanchine's New York City Ballet, among the most original embodiments of urban experience? If there was room for a long recap of the 1939 World's Fair (not really an art work), then why not some thoughts on a securely durable art like jazz?

But music is left out of account altogether in this book. Of course it is mostly a non-representational art. And that may explain why, among painters, we're given Oldenburg instead of Pollock or Kline

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or Rothko or Johns. But who doesn't acknowledge that non-representational or abstract art made in New York differs from its counterpart in other cities? That issue, however, might have drawn the author into deep theoretical waters. One can accede to choices made in the interest of brevity and unity and still quarrel, though, with what's in and what's out of this book. In literature, why does the author dwell so exhaustively on O. Henry and so little on John O'Hara? Why are John Cheever and James Baldwin not mentioned? Actually, the book trails off somewhere in the sixties and so excuses itself for ignoring, say, Isaac Singer, or Donald Barthelme, or James McCourt, Grace Paley, Woody Allen, or Robert Wilson, or Rackstraw Downes, or John Ashbery, or Howard Moss. As for architectural monuments, the time limit may explain, too, why nothing is done with the World Trade Center. (Would Peter Conrad have seen the twin highrises as having evolved from the androgynous parity of the seventies to modest sexual differentiation now that, in the eighties, the north tower, presumably the male, has been endowed with a TV aerial and/or mast for dirigibles?) These artistic instances come too late, apparently—but wait, Richard Estes's "photorealist" paintings of the seventies are discussed. The selection, we must conclude, is personal and arbitrary. But then how could any book of just over 300 pages cover the subject of New York in the arts with perfect fairness and proportion?

More to the point is the question of readership: who is the book intended for? The text seems at once too specialized and too general. It assumes a knowledge, for example, of Whitman's poetry few laymen possess, seldom identifying sources of quotations or distinguishing different periods in his life and work. On the other hand it provides exhaustive summaries of Edith Wharton's (and others') novels that scholars of American literature will not need—no more than they will care to hear about W. S. Porter's or Damon Runyon's stories, for these are never *taught*. The book is entirely innocent of footnotes and bibliography, a format held to be appealing for the non-expert. Speaking as one, though, I would myself have welcomed footnotes in order to trace some of the obscurer works and subjects treated. And the absence of bibliography implies that the author has reached all his insights without the help of earlier writers, which is hard to believe. There is, gratefully, a complete index. Now and then it provides a probably unintentional note of comedy, as in the entry for the Empire State Building: "Feininger on . . . Fitzgerald on . . . Kertèsz on . . . King Kong on . . ."

These limitations accepted, readers will be struck, I think, by the aptness of many of the observations made in the book, and certainly the archival labor behind it commands respect. There are good pages on Hart Crane's Brooklyn Bridge, a topic New York chroniclers have tended to skimp. (Though surely the commentator goes astray here when he concludes that the tensile aspect of bridge con-

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struction is to be assimilated to the "nervous tension" and even "neurosis" of Hart Crane. This is the error of reductiveness compounded by dependence on a weak pun.) Then, although few consider Radio City Music Hall a great work of art or even an important cultural symbol, if it is to be described, one has to applaud the research and inventiveness brought to bear on Conrad's iconographical discussion:

> Climbing the staircase in Radio City Music Hall also re-enacts an ascent to paradise, which the movies have made electrically recoverable. Ezra Winter's mural, based on an Oregon Indian legend, describes the search for happiness and perpetual youth. These are located on a pinnacle near the ceiling, across a gulf which deters the old man at the head of the stairs. He won't get there. We will, however, for at the top of the stairs is the auditorium, where we're issued into the etheric Eden of the movies and can gaze in wonderment at the agelessness of those unblemished faces on the screen.

That's assuming the movie we saw wasn't *Sunset Boulevard* or *On Golden Pond.* Come to think of it, the "paradise" of the movies, permanently recoverable and renewable, *is* rather like the Heavenly City of New York: its people, its buildings, and its art come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and ages, blemished or unblemished. We wouldn't have it any other way. That is part of the magnetism that drew so many of us here from other places—and part of the city's appropriateness as World Capital and nurturer of new art that will also somehow be New York art.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

When a recent interviewer made the mistake of asking the author what was the *purpose* of this most recent novel—what was he trying to *say*—his answer was that really one didn't know what to do with one's mornings; one couldn't just keep hanging about downstairs, now could one? It is an answer in tune with the generously giving yet withholding spirit of Anthony Powell, who for fifty-five years has given us so much we want to keep.

—William H. Pritchard, "Anthony Powell's Gift," p. 363

The unconscious project of society, in Donohue's view, is to remove mystery from the arts in order to defang them. One sees this happening almost daily as a President, say, quotes a line of poetry for his own political ends or a bank displays a revolutionary painting in its lobby. Art is easily tamed, misread, appropriated for ends the artists never dreamed of and would certainly never condone.

—Jay Parini, "The Limits of Expression," p. 521

James enjoyed the costly motor cars of several different friends, but Edith Wharton's he came to associate intimately with her. He quivered to her "silver-sounding toot"; he marveled at her "frame of steel"; she became "the Devastating Angel" and "the Firebird," and the car became simply "*She*." He called its allure "the poison of the motor" and once begged Mrs. Wharton—he was only half joking—"not to let it (i.e. *Her*!) get me!" But he never forgot the rapture; these were all "wondrous motor days."

—Dean Flower, "The Generosity of Poor Henry James," p. 461

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